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## The Times Literary Supplement

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Cover picture

"Farewell to Black-Eyed Sue and Sweet Polly of Plymouth", an anonymous engraving depicting the departure of convicts for Australia in the 1790s; it is reproduced from *The Fatal Shore: A history of the transportation of convicts to Australia 1787-1868* by Robert Hughes, which is reviewed on page 79.

## Worlds elsewhere

John North

PIERRE DUHAM

*Medieval Cosmology: Theories of infinity, place, time, void, and the plurality of worlds*. Edited and translated by Roger Ariew. 601pp. University of Chicago Press. £30.95. 0226169227

MICHAEL J. CROWE

*The Extraterrestrial Life Debate 1750-1900: The idea of a plurality of worlds from Kant to Lowell*. 680pp. Cambridge University Press. £40. 0521263050

A pluralist used to be someone who believed in, or drew a salary from, two separate realities. The alternatives were to hold to monism, or to a single benefice. Michael J. Crowe, however, in *The Extraterrestrial Life Debate 1750-1900*, uses the word so often in writing of believers in a plurality of worlds - as opposed to kinds of world - that this meaning is no doubt here to stay, even though he uses the word almost exclusively of those who believe in the existence of life on more worlds than one. His book reveals that the number of those who have done so in recent centuries is to be reckoned in thousands.

Pierre Duham did not inaugurate this sort of historical study, but he certainly helped to set the fashion for it. Duham was a pluralist of an earlier sort: he was a very good physicist, for all that he disapproved of the notion that matter is atomic, and was at the same time a seemingly inexhaustible writer on the history and philosophy of science. His printer must have had feelings resembling those of a man who, when selling me petrol, used to ask me to stop my engine, since his pump could not keep pace with it. Duham died in 1916 at the age of fifty-six, but only in 1959 did the presses at last catch up with his historical pen, more or less. That year saw the publication of the tenth and last volume of his *Système du monde*, which he had

not quite managed to complete, and which represented only a fraction of his life's work, but was monumental by any standards.

Evaluations of Duham's achievements as a historian vary considerably. To some he was hasty, inaccurate, prone to distortion and quotation out of context whenever he wished to prove a philosophical point - which was to say most of the time - and generally unreliable. To some, such as Alexandre Koyré, he had built up an impressive edifice of information, in particular about medieval science, but had done so in a way devoid of real historical organization or understanding. A more charitable note has been struck by others, for whom Duham was a man with all the instincts of the creative scientist, and a writer whose work reveals far more than the art of grubbing around in libraries can ever do.

There is some truth in all of these assessments. He was a far better historian than his contemporary Ernst Mach, who also used the history of science in the service of philosophy, yet judged by the standards of accuracy and astronomical comprehension set by Jean-Baptiste Delambre, for example, almost a century before him, or by the historical standards set by his older contemporary Paul Tannery, Duham does not cut the best of figures. When his *Système* at last became generally available, it was bought by many libraries, but I suspect that in most of them its pages remain to this day largely uncut. In part this is because in the decades following his death others scrutinized and analysed the same material more carefully than he had done; and in part it is because ten volumes are forbidding in themselves - and with uncut pages even more so. It would be interesting to know how many owners are even now ignorant of the fact that they possess an odd volume bearing the wrong cover, Volume Four inside the cover for Volume Nine, for instance.

Roger Ariew's collection, *Medieval Cosmology*, has the merits of selectivity, cut pages and a commercially advantageous language - albeit

one that is used by a people whose mentality, according to Duham, is broad but shallow. The rather free translation is often second-hand, to the extent that Duham translated extensively from Latin originals. Most of the passages chosen come from Volumes Seven and Ten, and seem to have been selected because they concern themes that have been much discussed since Duham's time. To take only four of the many scholars who have done so, Annaliese Maier, Marshall Clagett (whose name is invariably misspelled in the preface), John Murdoch and Edward Grant have gone over the same ground. This is ironic, for surely the parts of the *Système* that ought to be of greatest interest to the reader who requires a translation are precisely those that have not been subjected to more careful scrutiny than Duham was able to afford them in his marathon run through the centuries. At all events, the translation tends to take on the character of a statement of Duham's case in various historical debates that prove to have an abiding interest.

One of the most important of these centres on his thesis that the condemnations of Aristotelian teaching by Etienne Tempier, Bishop of Paris, and the Paris theology faculty, in the year 1277, were responsible for the birth of modern science. This is an extravagant claim, with which perhaps no one would now agree, but it is a more complex one than is often acknowledged. Broadly speaking, the argument goes that criticism of Aristotle forced the scholastics to conceive intelligent alternatives to those that had previously been admitted as conceivable. Duham's emphasis on medieval science as the art of the conceivable was undoubtedly right, and Koyré was on shaky ground in suggesting that scholastic thought was less sterile when it concerned the world as it is, than when it concerned the sundry possible worlds that God might have created, had he been so minded.

One of the articles of 1277 (it is often numbered 34) obliged Parisians to concede that

God, if he had so wished, could have made more than one world. However conducive to freedom of scientific thinking the resulting debate might have been, it was certainly not new. Putting aside the ancient disputes between Epicureans and Aristotelians, and others they had spawned, there is a clear statement of the problem in a text seemingly written by Michael Scot in the early 1230s. This comes in a commentary on Sacrobosco's *Sphere*, the most famous of all medieval textbooks of astronomy, and uses Aristotle's arguments against the possibility of a void to dismiss the notion of a plurality of worlds. Scot accepted that the space between two worlds could not be void, and yet if the space were filled with matter he could not see how the two worlds could be differentiated. Roger Bacon, Thomas Aquinas and many others were convinced by such arguments as this, and yet in the last analysis almost all felt the need to reserve to God the right to exercise his absolute power, and create more worlds than one.

In the fourteenth century especially, much thought was given to ways of making the possibility of other worlds intelligible. Natural philosophers were helped by their habit of thinking of the world as having a centre and a boundary, so that to speak of "a world outside our world", as did Ockham, caused few eyebrows to be raised. Some were in any case prone to doubt traditional arguments against the void, while for others the direction of the argument led from the postulation of other worlds to the existence of a void. There are dozens of philosophically valuable medieval discussions of such matters, many of them first brought to light by Pierre Duham in his *Système*, and many translated by Roger Ariew. There is enough tacit criticism of Aristotle in all this to make nonsense of the endlessly repeated claim that the scholars of Paris and Oxford in the late Middle Ages were purblind Aristotelians. What is more, a comparison of the general standard of medieval argument with much of that reported by Michael Crowe from

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the supposedly more enlightened end of history might have made even Herbert Spencer doubt the reality of Progress.

Astronomers seriously began to lose touch with the niceties of natural philosophy when the telescope revealed that the cosmos was not as simple as Aristotle had thought. Kepler's response to Galileo's discovery of the moons of Jupiter, for instance, was that Jupiter must be inhabited. The inference seems to have been by a weak analogy: "moons are to serve the inhabitants of their planet, ergo . . .". He was careful to add that man is the foremost of God's creatures. This was as well, for many must have been aware of the alarm shown long before by the Lutheran Melancthon that Copernicanism would lead to the belief that Christ died and was resurrected in more worlds than one. A couple of centuries later, and people would be rewriting Genesis, and postulating a hell at the centre of every planet. In Tom Paine, a belief in extraterrestrial life was to be turned against the very religion that had helped to form it.

Galileo was understandably alarmed by Kepler's thoughts, and decided, as he put it, to leave the decision to wiser men than himself. Tommaso Campanella, on the other hand, quite properly asked why we should suppose that creatures on other worlds must share in Adam's sin. Campanella greatly influenced the young John Wilkins, later Master of Trinity College, Cambridge, and then Bishop of Chester. Wilkins thought it probable that our own moon is inhabited, perhaps by creatures of a type between men and angels. In due course he was speculating on the possibility of travel to the moon, which prompted Robert South to ask whether he was looking for a bishopric there, and gave Samuel Butler a theme for his attack on the Royal Society - "The Elephant in the Moon". As for empirical evidence for such ideas, it was for long hard to improve on Pierre Borel's observation that the Bird of Paradise is found on our Earth only when dead, and that it must therefore come from our satellite.

Descartes's physics made out each star to be a sun, potentially surrounded by planets, although he felt himself unable to pronounce on whether they were inhabited or not. There were too many missing pieces of evidence, especially on the biological side. The existence of life elsewhere in the universe, in particular intelligent life, now seems so patently a question for the natural sciences that it is easy to overlook the fact that so many types of argument originally began from essentially theological premises. Astronomers typically assumed a purpose in the creation of the planets and their satellites - and what could their purpose be, other than to serve their inhabitants? Thomas Baker was unusual in arguing that the other planets might have been made for our sake. Writers as a whole assumed an inherent value in these bodies. It was by doing so that Christian Huygens was led by the faintest of threads to infer that their inhabitants would be as advanced in their astronomy as are our own astronomers. Some writers, such as John Locke, argued from the infinite power of the Creator to the likelihood that man was in all probability one of the lowest of intellectual beings, Leibniz, perhaps tongue in cheek, anticipated other potentially sensitive theological problems, touching on our right to baptize lunarians, and our obligation to propagate the Christian faith actively beyond our own globe.

It was Huygens's book *Cosmotheoros*, as it happens, that inspired Thomas Plume, the vicar of Greenwich, to found the Plumian chair of astronomy in Cambridge. It had a different reception in Russia. Ordered by Peter the Great to issue that same book, Avramov was filled with religious terror, frightened to publish, and frightened not to publish. He settled on a print order of thirty copies, and set out to conceal most of them, thus greatly enhancing their antiquarian price.

The period before Crowe's book begins in earnest saw the formulation of most of the basic arguments, but they were to be dressed up in endless ways thereafter. There was quantification, of course, such as when Christian Wolff calculated that the height of Jovian's must be 13.4 Paris feet, and when Thomas Wright, the Yorkshire Durham astronomer, estimated that there are 170 million inhabited globes within our view. Few of them, however, are as large as Earth.

needles are balanced on so fine a point. The "pre-critical" Kant followed in the old tradition that there is a hierarchy of rational creatures, and that the further they are from the centre, the more perfect they are. Might our souls not end up on Jupiter or Saturn? It is well known that Kant claimed to have been awakened from his dogmatic slumbers by Hume, but few can realize that his dreams had been so pointedly medieval. He should perhaps have paid more heed to Voltaire's remark that the argument for animal life on other planets is no more probable than that of a man in the street who has fleas and concludes that all passers-by must therefore likewise have them.

Astronomy is often represented as having got into its empirical stride with the building of ever more powerful telescopes in the late eighteenth century, but if anything, the more difficult it became to uphold the notion of life on other planets, the wilder the argument. The great William Herschel believed not only in life on the moon and planets, but on the Sun too, which he took to be a cool body covered with a cloud capable of protecting its inhabitants from the heat and light of its exterior. (This idea is remarkably like one developed by Nicholas of Cusa in the fifteenth century.) Herschel's contemporary J. H. Schröter thought it possible to detect colour changes on the lunar surface indicative of cultivation, and fogs betraying lunar industry. To quote Lalande somewhat out of context, "imagination pierces beyond the telescope".

Again and again, as Crowe's sources remind us, prior religious convictions long continued to guide astronomical belief. The number of potential references is as great as the number of books on theology, which is to say, nearly infinite. To take a single line of thought: Edward Young's vision of our fallen Earth rolling along through a host of inhabited but sinless spheres finds echoes in the writing of Thomas Chalmers in the nineteenth century and C. S. Lewis in the twentieth. But there were other forms of prejudice than theological. A Latin verse by Thomas Gray predicted that our moon would one day become a British colony. Perhaps it was this that prompted the Philadelphian David Rittenhouse to declaim on the happiness of inhabitants of worlds secure from "the rapacious hand of the haughty Spaniard, and of the unfeeling British nabob. Even British thunder impelled by British thirst of gain, cannot reach you . . .".

Sixty years later the New York *Sun* became the newspaper on our planet with the largest daily circulation, thanks to a series of anonymous articles (they were by Richard Adams Locke, a collateral descendant of the philosopher) about the discoveries made by Sir John Herschel at the Cape. Minute descriptions were given of the lunarians he had supposedly seen through his telescope. Their faces, for instance, were of a yellowish flesh-colour, and

## Right reason and the right thing

W. B. Ewald

ALLAN B. WOLTER (Editor)  
*Duns Scotus on the Will and Morality*  
543pp. Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press. \$54.95.  
0 8132 06227

Duns Scotus, the *doctor subtilis*, whom C. S. Lewis called "the greatest speculative mind of the middle ages", and who made revolutionary contributions to logic, metaphysics, philosophical psychology and moral theory, is perhaps the most neglected of the great philosophers. The last complete edition of his works, filling sixteen folio volumes, was published in 1639; only the barest fragment of this material has been translated into any modern language.

Although Scotus was not primarily an ethicist, his writings mark a turning-point in the history of moral theory. Where virtually all previous philosophy had taken morality to demand the subordination of the will to the reason, Scotus argued that some parts of the moral law (in particular, the second table of the decalogue) are a product of the divine will, not of the intellect. For this reason, he has often

a slight improvement on the orang-utan's. "Lieut. Drummond said they would look as well on a parade ground as some of the old cockney militia." What better material could one offer a gullible population, evidently strongly predisposed to believe? No matter that the articles were a hoax, impelled by American thirst of gain. If only John Locke had had the same touch!

Little by little, a more commendable scientific note had been creeping into the debate. Buffon was an early member of the species astro-biologist. He postulated that identical temperatures produce and nourish identical beings, and he developed elaborate theories of planetary cooling from an early incandescent state, to decide on the duration of life on planets and their satellites. In the nineteenth century, so firm was the belief in lunar intelligence that methods of signalling to our nearest cosmic neighbours were devised, such as that of igniting kerosene on the surface of a vast Saharan canal cut in geometrical form. Today



"The Hansel", a fountain figure of about 1380, is reproduced from *Gothic and Renaissance Art in Nuremberg 1300-1550* (1999), with 148 colour and 414 black-and-white illustrations. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art/Munich: Prestel, for the Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nuremberg. £35. 0 8709 463 4.

been interpreted as a voluntarist, an irrationalist who believed that morality is nothing more than the arbitrary will of God and therefore beyond the capacity of reason to understand; and there is no doubt that his writings inaugurated a line of thought that was to develop, by way of Occam and Hobbes, into the emotive theory of ethics and the positivist theory of law.

But, as Allan B. Wolter, the editor of *Duns Scotus on the Will and Morality*, rightly points out, and as his selections make clear, Scotus occupies an intermediate position between the rationalism that preceded him and the voluntarism that was yet to come. He regarded the will as itself being a rational faculty; he was careful to distinguish it from mere desire. It is this distinction that allows him to emphasize the importance of the will, and at the same time to insist that *recta ratio*, is the standard for judging human actions; to give a richer account of moral psychology than Aquinas, but to avoid ethical irrationalism. It is precisely Scotus' attempt to reconcile these tensions that makes him one of the most difficult and rewarding moral philosophers. The problems he discusses are still at the heart of moral theory; his answers deserve study in their own right, not just as historical curiosities.

This book consists of selections from Scotus

we send similar messages on the nose-cones of rockets. The believers did not, of course, have things all their own way. One who effectively poured cold water on the idea that the planets in our system are habitable was Mary Somerville, but the most devastating attack, for its time, was that by William Whewell, another Master of Trinity College.

Crowe has proved himself an assiduous collector of material, and short of an investigation of extra-European and North American cultures, it is doubtful whether his catalogue of belief would have been much changed in character had he amassed further examples. As with all such histories, it is difficult to gauge the importance that was actually assigned to the central idea, for want of external reference. Was Robert Burton - to take one of numerous similar examples - a "pluralist" or not? It seems that opinions differ, and this very fact might reasonably tempt us to suppose that the issue was not exactly at the front of his consciousness. The book contains rather too many unsupported propositions of the sort "no doubt such-and-such an achievement was due to the effectiveness with which he proclaimed pluralism". Our problems here are analogous to those a Martian would face if he, she, or it were to try to learn history in general from *Widen*.

Intellectual history in this style needs another sort of reference, namely to the structures of the various arguments it catalogues. Here its author has been satisfied with a few inadequate assessments of analogical argument, themselves historical. Perhaps he was daunted by the sheer variety of his material, which encompasses the empirical debates of the late nineteenth century on the significance of the canal-like markings of Mars, the cleared scientific and theological critique offered by Whewell, the sources and motivations of the Romantic poets, the wild inanities of the utopian social reformer Charles Fourier, the arguments of evolutionists who saw that worms were more relevant to the discussion than human beings, the dreams of the Swedenborgians, and dozens more themes besides. To put into the same sheets such incongruous bedfellows as these is not just to flit with the impossible but to risk turning history into a mere compendium of curiosities. Crowe has generally managed to avoid this pitfall, but readers determined to seek out the eccentric or bizarre will not be disappointed. To take one last example, they will be grateful for a context for an often-reproduced series of drawings by J. J. Grandville. These satirize Fourier's vision of a universe in which the planets are not only inhabited but procreate - as do stars - by sexual means. In Fourier's world, as it would be when transfigured by organization into communal villages ("phalansteries"), the North Sea would turn into lemonade and our exhausted moon would be replaced by five others.

They knew how to deal with people like Fourier in the Parls of 1277.

moral philosophy, with an *en face* English translation; it is the only work of its kind. The Latin texts have been edited anew, and are often much clearer than in the edition of 1639. The selections range over moral psychology (the relation of the will to the intellect, freedom of the will, pleasure), meta-ethics (the source of moral goodness, the relationship of God's will to the moral law, the nature of law) and ethics (the intellectual and moral virtues, the love of God, self and neighbour, the nature of sin). A long introduction explains how the selections are related to each other and to Scotus' philosophy as a whole. The translation is workmanlike and reliable, despite a few small slips.

This is an excellent introduction to Scotus' moral philosophy; it takes the first step towards filling a conspicuous gap. But it is only the first step. Almost all of Scotus remains untranslated, and anybody inspired by this selection to deeper explorations will have to turn to the edition of 1639. For this reason, it would have been helpful had the editor included a glossary and a discussion of the linguistic and textual difficulties that will beset anybody trying to understand a profound and difficult thinker whose name, unfortunately, is best known as the source of the word "dunce".

## Our man in the Holy City

Denis Mack Smith

OWEN CHADWICK  
*Britain and the Vatican during the Second World War*  
332pp. Cambridge University Press. £25.  
0 521 32242 1

This is the story of d'Arcy Godolphin Osborne, who was British minister to the Holy See throughout the Second World War. The Vatican was a lonely and prison-like residence for a non-Italian layman, with few people to talk to and little contact with the outside world; but he carried out his duties with tact, dignity, even nobility, and earned the respect of almost everyone. Owen Chadwick, in *Britain and the Vatican during the Second World War*, gives a most attractive picture of a good-natured and humane character, a bachelor whose love of good living and pretty women hardly equipped him for a semi-monastic existence inside an authoritarian clerical state while the rest of Europe was at war. Since Cardinal Canali, the chief administrator of Vatican City, was strongly pro-Fascist and no friend to Britain, there were some minor hardships and the minister was once spitefully deprived of hot water, but the discomfort was alleviated when a future Pope, Monsignor Montini, put his private bathroom at Osborne's disposal. By some mysterious means this isolated exile enjoyed a never-failing supply of whisky and Balkan Sobranie, and his four servants had little difficulty buying food on the black market. Even Cardinal Canali relented to the extent of allowing use of a tennis-court belonging to the Abyssinian College, so long as no ladies were permitted to play.

The second leading character is Pius XII, a man greatly liked by Osborne for his kindness and saintliness, but who was too much of a neutral and compromiser to be a truly great Pope. Pius once expressed his admiration for the "incomparable" Mussolini and continued to assume, perhaps unduly, that the Lateran Treaty of 1929 excused his reticence over Fascist aggression and persecution. Professor Chadwick reports one rumour that the Church helped to finance Mussolini's conquest of Abyssinia, and we now know that it was true, as it is also true that the Papacy never felt able

to condemn the use of poison gas against civilian populations in Africa. In September 1939, Pius sincerely believed that France and Britain ought to give way to Hitler so as to prevent war, and he used drafts prepared by Mussolini when urging Poland to surrender some national territory. This behaviour earned him an unfortunate reputation of being "Mussolini's secret agent", which was undeserved. He rather saw himself as a non-political mediator, and the Vatican radio was later allowed, if not actually encouraged, to condemn German cruelties against the Polish nation. It was a one-off condemnation and perhaps was regretted, since all future pronouncements were more circumspect.

Another interesting revelation describes how Pius, early in 1940, without telling his Secretary of State - who was known to have a German spy in his office - passed information to London from conspirators in the German army: they were ready to dethrone Hitler in return for a compromise peace that left an enlarged Germany and its army intact. Pius said he intensely disliked stooping to such an act of subterfuge, but his conscience compelled him to pursue every possibility of ending the war. Chadwick even thinks that the British government was wrong to disregard such a brave initiative. Once again, after the French armistice in the summer of 1940, the Pope encouraged Britain to make peace, and this time he had an additional reason: lest Hitler should occupy London and discover documents linking the Papacy to these military conspirators in Germany.

Osborne agreed with people who thought that the Vatican should have been far more explicit in condemning the Nazis for their inhuman atrocities. But the Pope, who did condemn aggression and persecution in general terms, tended to use obscurely prolix language and was careful not to mention the Nazis or take sides too openly. Osborne thought that Pius was privately against the Axis powers, but it is not without interest that the German ambassador to the Vatican reported the very opposite. The Pope was too gentle and indecisive to countenance a real fight that would compromise his position as a peacemaker. He was bound to offend some people, whatever he did or failed to do. He certainly gave offence by officially receiving Pavelic, the Croat leader

who had murdered hundreds of thousands of non-Catholics and forcibly "converted" as many more.

When, in April 1941, the Vatican radio was instructed by the Pope that there should be no further public mention of religious persecution in Germany, Osborne registered a formal protest. He also protested that, even though the Vatican saved the lives of many individual Jews, it could and should have done much more. Indeed he called it, with some exaggeration, "the only State which has not condemned the persecution of the Jews". Chadwick says in mitigation that no one until 1942 was aware of Hitler's policy of wholesale murder. But Mussolini's government knew much earlier. The most charitable explanation is that the Vatican's knowledge of the outside world was surprisingly poor. Chadwick describes its machinery as archaic, its nuncios as mediocre and its sources of information as far more inadequate than has been generally assumed.

Mussolini told Hitler privately that he would one day abolish the Papacy, or at least expel it from Italy, since there was no room for two masters in Rome. The Vatican was, said the Duce, a "fifth column in Italy", "a malignant tumour in the body politic". In the mean time the Fascist Ovra, like the Gestapo, infiltrated plenty of agents into the papal bureaucracy. Osborne even had to dismiss his personal footman, who was revealed as being an Italian police spy. (The man then had the face to ask for a character reference.) Osborne's diary has much similar information on petty intrigues and unedifying backstairs activity inside the Vatican. He himself used to pay an obliging Monsignore for secret information, until it was discovered that this same clerical dignity was simultaneously paid by the enemy.

It became clear quite early that the Italians had no trouble in reading the British secret codes and were regularly opening the Vatican diplomatic bag, just as they had done in the First World War. Osborne nevertheless had to continue the tedious task of putting his official reports into cipher, for otherwise the Fascist police might suspect that he knew what they were up to. The same identical farce had afflicted the British embassy to the Italian government before 1939, and one wonders whether, or how much, false information was in this way planted on the Italians, and how

much was believed. Osborne was somehow able to use a new and secret cipher on August 17, 1943, after Mussolini's fall, and it is a great pity that Chadwick can tell us no more about this mysterious but important fact: because one week earlier Osborne had refused to transmit an urgent Italian request for an armistice on the grounds that he lacked a secret cipher, and his refusal was a major catastrophe for both the Italians and the Allied invasion forces.

One suggestion in this book is that Osborne was chiefly responsible for setting up negotiations for the armistice that took Italy out of the war, but a different interpretation emerges if less reliance is placed on Foreign Office records and more on those of Allied military headquarters. The armistice was concluded as a result of talks in Lisbon, Algiers and Sicily, whereas Rome had a very marginal importance at this crucial moment. Another unpersuasive argument condemns the Allies for behaving with great stupidity in negotiating the armistice. The words "foolish" and "stupid" are used more than once about Churchill and Eisenhower. The Allies are even accused of "betrayal", which is a judgment far sharper than any others throughout this essentially generous and level-headed study. More plausible and challenging is the interesting conclusion that the Germans were more responsible for the tragic destruction of Monte Cassino than the Pope was willing to concede.

In 1943, Pius sent a pressing demand to London that Italy should be spared the horrors of an actual invasion lest it lead to a Communist take-over, but the request met only astonishment and incredulity. A supplementary request was that Allied bombers should at least spare Rome - not merely the Vatican City but the town of Rome itself with its important railway yards. The Pope spoke here as Bishop of Rome and his anxiety is understandable, but Osborne was outraged at the apparently insensitive anomaly that the Papacy had not protested in similar terms against the bombing of London and Coventry. Moreover, Rome was the headquarters of the Italian armed forces and was deliberately kept as such by Mussolini in the confident expectation that the Holy City was immune from attack.

Osborne did not always approve of British policy after the invasion of Italy began, and

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sometimes was outspoken enough to tell Pius of his disapproval. Some of the more interesting pages of Chadwick's book deal with these later stages of the war and the help Osborne was able to give to escaping British prisoners of war. At one moment he had a British officer hiding in his Vatican flat, but both sides seem to have treated diplomatic immunity with some disrespect. As victory came nearer and his authority grew, he had to cope with some strange requests, including one from the Pope that no coloured troops be allowed into the Holy City.

The whole narrative is full of such fascinating details, and they are told with great skill, though the fact that the book emerged out of Professor Chadwick's Ford Lectures (1981) may explain why the language is sometimes a bit slipshod. Pius is shown as a good man who in theory carried great influence in Italy and throughout the world. Yet it does not seem that either he or Osborne had much practical effect on the course of events. When the Pope appealed for peace, "no one took the least notice". Nor did he have any hand in the ousting of Mussolini and the collapse of Fascism. But the Papacy survived and probably would have suffered more under a Pope of sterner and more uncompromising mettle. Practical results, however, do not constitute the chief interest of this volume. What it gives us is a completely new insight into the inner workings of the Vatican, and the human story of the relationship between two exceptional men is sheer delight.

## Sowing the seeds of reconquista

Martin Clark

GIORGIO COSMACINI  
Gemelli: il Machiavelli di Dio  
329pp. Milan: Rizzoli. L20,000.

Agostino (born Edoardo) Gemelli is best known as the founder of the University of the Sacred Heart in Milan. He remained *Retore* (Principal) virtually until his death in 1959. Much of his biography is, therefore, the history of that important institution, "the cradle of the Catholic ruling class" of post-war Italy, promoted by Gemelli through a series of brilliant political-academic intrigues, and run by him with characteristically authoritarian intemperance.

But there was always more to Gemelli than the great academic "baron", the autocratic manipulator, of popular fame. He was also zoologist, doctor, psychologist, philosopher and, most surprisingly of all, a Franciscan friar. Science seems to have been his real passion, although knowledge was always closely linked to power. He remained a respected experimental psychologist all his life, building up the psychology department at his university, carrying out important studies on aptitude testing and industrial psychology, and fiercely denouncing what he saw as the charlatanism of psychoanalysis. Giorgio Cosmacini has little to say, in *Gemelli: il Machiavelli di Dio*, about Gemelli's religious life, and indeed rather casts doubt on its existence: "the Franciscan habit has probably never been worn with such disparity from the original spirit of the Founder". He wonders, in particular, what St Francis would have made of Gemelli's constant practice of vivisection, noting that Gemelli defended it not on feeble utilitarian grounds of possible future benefit to humanity, but simply because of the inherent desirability of scientific knowledge.

Gemelli started out as a doctor, graduating in medicine at Pavia University with a significant thesis on the pituitary gland. Like many Italian doctors at the turn of the century, the young Gemelli was a committed socialist and anticlerical, although Cosmacini dryly notes that his socialism was soon jettisoned once he began work as assistant to Camillo Golgi, Retore of Pavia, a Nobel Prize-winning pathologist of robustly conservative views. But there was nothing calculated about Gemelli's religious conversion a year or two later. In the postwar atmosphere of the day, it was extraordinary for a scientist to become a Catholic, let alone a friar. His conversion alienated both his scientific patron and his bourgeois



Soldiers of the British Eighth Army; this photograph is reproduced from Charles Whiting's *The Long March on Rome: The forgotten war* (160pp. Century. £14.95. 071269582 6).

Milanese family; it all but isolated him intellectually, and threatened to cut him off from research work. Cosmacini cannot explain it, but he has done some useful detective work on Gemelli's brief, unhappy attachment to a girl who was engaged to another man, and he shows how a group of scientist priests at Pavia seminary provided a far more human environment than the official scientific community ever had.

Friar Agostino soon showed his real talent, that of serving and influencing the powerful. Impeccably orthodox during the Modernist controversies, he was used for some of the Vatican's less reputable efforts at arm-twisting; and by 1908 he had the ear of the Pope. Later on, he had an enjoyable Great War as psychological assessor, writing a pioneering study of the soldiers' attitudes and values, and returning battle-weary pilots to their squadrons in the classic Medical Officer manner. He also managed to worm his way somehow into the army's Supreme Command at Udine, building up useful contacts with the top brass.

After the war the time seemed ripe to instigate his great project of a Catholic University, which he had conceived back in 1907 as a challenge to the lay, positivist, anticlerical state universities. Gemelli secured Vatican support, as well as that of leading Catholic politicians and industrialists. By 1921 the University of the Sacred Heart was in existence. It was blessed not only by the Church but by the State, in that the State recognized its degrees. Successive Ministers of Education in the early 1920s – including both Benedetto Croce and Giovanni Gentile – were also anxious to combat positivism, and saw the Catholic University as potentially useful. Gemelli's vision was very different. The Catholic University was to be a bastion of tough-minded orthodoxy, where a new elite would be trained over successive generations, and from which a *reconquista* of Italian society would be launched. The teaching staff was Catholic, young and highly competent; students took a compulsory course on a religious topic each year. As for the Fascist governments after 1922, Gemelli had no trouble there; he shared many of their values, sometimes to excess. He was, for example, considerably less liberal than Giuseppe Bottai, Minister of Education in the 1930s; he was also more unrepentant than most leading Fascists. But however much Gemelli approved of the Fascist State, it was still only a State; he was always committed to a *reconquista*, and that could only be done by the Church.

After September 1943, Gemelli (who had never shown himself averse to the corridors of power) allowed the Catholic University to be-

come quite a centre of Resistance activity. Many teachers were "absent" (that is, in the hills), but were regularly paid, to avoid arousing suspicion; escape routes were organized from the university by "Father Carlo"; Sandro Pertini hid in Gemelli's psychology laboratory in 1944; even the Resistance High Command under General Raffaele Cadorna met several times in the university in 1944-5 – a fact that was very useful to Gemelli during the post-war "purges" of Fascist collaborators. Gemelli was one of nature's survivors; more importantly, he wanted his university to survive too, with himself at the helm. In this he succeeded yet again, although not without some moments of unpleasantness provoked by a British purge officer, Major Vessello (one would like to know more about him), as well as by a judicious "rest-cure" imposed by the Vatican.

After 1945, and especially 1948, came the years of apparent triumph. Gemelli's ex-students and "professorini", educated and pious, literally took over the management of Italy, staffing a host of agencies and providing the managers for state and private enterprises. Yet many Christian Democrats remained rather suspicious of him, if only for his record under Fascism. The Catholic University had conspicuously failed to produce specifically Catholic political, social or economic doctrines before 1948; even later it seemed too reactionary, too Vatican-bound, and a slight too authoritarian, to many Christian Democrats, although Amintore Fanfani seems to have always remained loyal to his ex-maestro. Gemelli, too, was not the man he had been. By 1948 he was seventy years old, and almost confined to a wheelchair; within a few years he was showing disturbing signs of having mellowed, even of being willing to tolerate limited dissent. His university, too, became less aggressive, less "integralist", as time went on: as the spirit of *reconquista* died down, it continued as a worthy educational establishment, but it became less and less distinctively Catholic.

All this is told by Cosmacini with much fairness and insight. He has not had access to most family or university papers, and his account of events is therefore often unduly general or speculative, particularly for the period since 1945. Even so, this remains the first serious, non-hagiographical treatment of Gemelli, and of a major cultural and educational enterprise in twentieth-century Italy.

Portrait in *Life* by Alberto Sordi

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## Fatal order

Raleigh Trevelyan

DOMINICK GRAHAM and SHEL FORD BIDWELL  
*Tug of War: The battle for Italy, 1943-45*  
445pp. Hodder and Stoughton. £14.95.  
0340 34347 8

Clashes in temperament and style between Allied commanders have become familiar themes in books about the Second World War, and nowhere more than in accounts of the Italian campaign. *Tug of War: The battle for Italy, 1943-45* is very much concerned with what Dominick Graham and Shelford Bidwell call a "coalitionary war". Nevertheless the "tug" of its title refers to something different: namely that military operations acquire a "self-generating momentum", and how in the case of Italy what had been meant as a swift campaign turned into a lengthy and agonizing struggle. The authors see the campaign – which after all was only subsidiary to the main effort in Europe – in its historical perspective and as a classic example of a campaign that absorbed more and more men and materials.

A special importance of this book is the use made of documents – including German war diaries and recorded interviews with German generals – not only at Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, and the American National Archives, but in New Zealand and Canada as well. There has also been access to other unpublished sources such as the diary of General Kirkman of the 13th Corps. No other book on the Italian campaign has been so thorough in this way.

Although Graham and Bidwell analyse in considerable detail the great set-pieces such as Salerno, the Anzio landings, the abortive attempts on the monastery at Monte Cassino and the breaking of the Gothic Line, they have not attempted a blow-by-blow history. Their exhaustive researches give a good idea of how no battle can follow textbook rules, and how so much depends on the unexpected, and indeed on the calibre of the ordinary fighting men. In the case of Salerno, for example, they examine the causes behind the mutiny of 700 reinforcements, so humiliating then to the British command and kept secret from the public for so long. Elsewhere, from the Freyberg papers, there are some telling figures for mutiny, desertion and absence without leave up to July 1944: 278 from the 46th Division, 240 from the 56th, and only seventeen from the 4th Indian. A contrast is also made between the American General Mark Clark's tough-minded waste of manpower and the British concern to avoid casualties. After Salerno, Kesselring got the measure of his opponents and concluded that one German soldier was worth three Anglo-Americans: for him therefore, Salerno was by no means a defeat.

The real reason for the Allied failure to drive on the Alban Hills, or even to capture Rome, after the Anzio landings is seen as being the Bloody River disaster on the Garigliano. The original plan had been ruined, and logically the landings should have been cancelled; but it was too late – and so it became once more a case of the tug of the self-generating momentum.

The main emphasis of the book, though, is inevitably on Cassino. Graham tells us that he spent days walking the terrain on those awful crags and ridges. It is concluded that Clark was definitely against the bombing of the monastery, but the much-discussed issue of who gave the fatal order is shown to have been in a sense secondary to two other questions: why were heavy bombers used rather than the fighter bombers that were originally requested, and why did the 4th Indian wait sixty hours before going into the attack?

There is no point, they say, in "waxing indignant" about Clark disobeying Alexander's order to drive on to Valtomone after the break-out from Anzio, and they give their reasons. But in this case I am not convinced, and I still do wax indignant. Thanks to Clark's despite for the "poor dumb British", and his insatiable vanity, the war in Italy was prolonged and thousands more died. And yet at this distance it is only too easy to overlook the terrible strains and stresses that required instant and far-reaching decisions, so often hampered and frustrated by that unwieldy "coalitionary" command – a point which this book underlines very well indeed.

## The building of hell on earth

Peter Porter

ROBERT HUGHES  
*The Fatal Shore: A history of the transportation of convicts to Australia, 1787-1868*  
688pp. Collins Harvill. £15.  
000 217361 1

In the early 1970s some entrepreneurs gouged a hole out of the bush north of Sydney near Gosford, filled it with water and built a tourist attraction on the banks of the lake they had created, and called it Sydney Old Town. It was not finished when I visited it in 1975, though it had a couple of streets running up from Sydney Cove, the Tank Stream, a flag-pole, a brig at anchor on the supposed harbour and a church in construction. Highlight of the day's activity was always 2pm, when the flogging of the female convicts was scheduled. The resting actors and actresses did their best, but despite the natural bloodthirstiness of the audience, the performance was pale and half-hearted, and, as I remember it, they did not use the correct instrument of torture, the dreaded "triangle" to which the victim was strapped, and which plays so large a part in *The Fatal Shore*.

This "Old Sydney" was a piece of vaudeville, utterly unlike the reality which burns its way through Robert Hughes's history of the transportation of convicts to Australia, from 1787 to 1868. Other people have had similar show-business ideas: Hughes, in his very full presentation of that place of special horror, Van Diemen's Land, mentions that the ruins of the spectacular hell-hole, Port Arthur, were once intended as an entertainment park, to be called "Convictland". When I was at Gosford, the crowd on a day out in Sydney Old Town included a large number of migrants, and the languages in which they expressed their wonder, peering in at the simulated gaols, shops and barracks, were from Southern Europe and Turkey. Here they could take a crash course in the history of their new country, without having to read difficult books.

The "Old" Australians who circulated with them probably knew not that much more about the foundation of New South Wales: their memories would have been of school histories taking them through the First Fleet, the Starvation Years, Governor Bligh's conflict with the Rum Corps, the public works of Governor Lachlan Macquarie, John Macarthur and his merinos, the great explorers like Sturt and Mitchell, romantic failures like Leichardt, and so on through the Gold Rushes to the rather boring details of the struggle for representative government which culminated in Federation in 1901. All of this, together with Anzac Day and Test cricket, would be merely a background to the real life of Sydney, a hard, bustling city of five television channels, countless radio stations, high real-estate prices, and a fondness for self-congratulation at its standard of living and its hedonistic pursuits. At the heart of Australian self-awareness there remains a great hole, deeper than the one the showmen filled with water at Sydney Old Town – a dreadful absence called "the Convicts".

In thousands of ways, Australians have not faced up to the origins of their country. Because transportation cannot be ignored, it must be transmuted, and each and every transmutation is a ploy to the present. You can say that what began as hell could nevertheless lead to paradise. Thus Australia need not go sour like America: its hope is of Arcadia, not Utopia. Australian nature poets lend their pantheism to this cause. Or you can say that a British Gulag in the South Pacific turned into a favoured incubator of democracy, aided and abetted by the muse Clio – in this case, the end result allows you to apostrophize Australia as "the Lucky Country", a place you can both be pleased to live in and yet chide for its complacency. Robert Hughes won't let us console ourselves about the past, whatever we choose to do with the present. He rubs our noses in the real torment suffered by 160,000 transported felons, male and female, and never lets us forget that, whichever way we look at Australia, it could hardly have been established without the labour of those unwilling pioneers, its despairing first white inhabitants. Hughes's book is a magnificent document.

ment, moving and painstakingly researched; the voices of the convicts themselves have not all disappeared, and Hughes has tracked them down so that they may speak as their ghostly selves. It may not be orthodox history but it is a terrifying story, one the historians should have given us years ago.

Initially it is not an Australian story, but a British one. Having asserted this, one must add that the reader should avoid retrospective indignation. Comparisons with other colonial atrocities should be eschewed as well, apart from a wondering recognition that the British seem unique in reserving their worst cruelties for their own people, rather than for the natives of the countries they occupy. Concern for the Aborigines, as newly enrolled citizens of King George III, urged upon Governor Phillip and the First Fleet, stuck in convict gulags, though it did little to help the Aborigines. Modern Australians are often moved to say that the horrors of their country's past came from the devil in the British psyche, but Hughes makes it plain that once the colony began to prosper through its Emancipists, its "Exclusives" with their convict labour force, and the various entrepreneurs who made fortunes in Sydney in whaling, sealing and factoring, a special horror at the convict "stain" manifested itself. These first Australians were determined to separate themselves from the convicts, just as respectable people in Britain wanted to stay above the horrible flux of the wicked poor. Australian Toryism was born early.

Hughes begins his account of transportation with an examination of the motives of the British Government in deciding to send the First Fleet. The prison hulks were full, the newly independent American colonies would take no more transportees, yet seventeen years had passed since Captain Cook annexed New South Wales for Britain. Historians looking for a more high-minded beginning for Australia have uncovered evidence that the colony was established as much to keep the French away from British Far Eastern interests as to become a dumping ground for troublesome felons. Hughes finds this unconvincing, and his pages on the British penal system are persuasively gruesome and Hogarthian. The note of brutality and horror is struck right from the start, though there is an element of Grand Guignol here which disappears once he is writing about convict life in Australia. (Early on, the reader is confronted by Hughes's knowing style, a form of encapsulated over-writing which dwindles as the book goes on and never debilitates its power.) We learn that some British gaols had been privatized in the eighteenth century, and were far nastier than this early Thatcherite principle was followed. Also, plentiful advice came to Pitt from assorted busybodies, which he was too preoccupied to concern himself with, to the good fortune of the convicts, since almost every theoretical notion of how to punish and reform led to the greater misery of its subjects, except for the humane system of Alexander Maconochie, much later, in Norfolk Island. It is agreeable to learn that none was worse than the Panopticon proposal of Jeremy Bentham, which he urged upon a generation of administrators, but which only matured in the horrors of the Philadelphia prison system which sickened Charles Dickens. Sadder to read of are the admonitions of Sydney Smith, urging the British Government to ensure that conditions for convicts in New South Wales be as dreadful as possible to act as a deterrent to the criminal class at home.

This became a constant theme of British officials concerned with transportation, from Colonial Secretaries downwards, with Whigs and Liberals like Lord Grey, Lord Stanley and W. E. Gladstone as brutal as any. Even before the First Fleet sailed, Alexander Dalrymple, an official of the East India Company, hit on the idea which filled British official minds for so long, that transportation might misfire if its end effect were to provide a better life for its victims than they could ever expect in their homeland. Ensuring that New South Wales, and especially the outlying settlements of Van Diemen's Land, Moreton Bay and Norfolk Island (and since the colony was established, and (since, once the colony was established, Sydney needed its own remote-out-stations to which it could deport incorrigibles), would be hell on earth, became the concern of despots like "Governors" Brisbane, Darling, and

sadists like Morriset, Logan and Price.

The arrival of the First Fleet and the move to Sydney Cove from Botany Bay has been described often, and Hughes adds little to the familiar picture, beyond a characteristic comment on the orgy which ensued when the female convicts were landed – "It was the first bush party in Australia. As the couples rutted between the rocks . . . the sexual history of colonial Australia may fairly be said to have begun." However, it is an admirable strategy that *The Fatal Shore* is not lured down the well-travelled path of the accelerating economic progress of the settlement, the paternalism of its governors and their conflicts with their turbulent subjects. This official history of Australia causes the convicts to drop out of sight all too quickly. Hughes keeps his eyes on the practical working of "the System", and all the well-known material of early Australian history becomes merely a setting for the convicts' story.

Early in the book, Hughes sums up the effect of transportation on the newly minted Australian character. "The social and psychic results", he writes, "were considerable, for a young country does not serve as the pad on which England drew its sketches for the immense gulags of the twentieth century without acquiring a few marks and scars." His picture thereafter opens out to a wide panorama of convict life – who the convicts were and what they did before being transported, how they worked, firstly around Sydney, and then in Van Diemen's Land, their relations with the new "gentlemen" of NSW, the metastasis of further settlement, and finally the movement towards abolition, together with the opposition it provoked both in the colony and in Britain. The detail is bewildering – no fact is too small for Hughes to record it. We even discover that "rum" in New South Wales was not rum, but usually arrack, aguardiente, pooten, moonshine and home brew imported from Bengal. Much of the evidence comes in the convicts' own words: Hughes has uncovered letters, diaries, petitions, memoirs, in which the victims of the system speak both overtly and covertly. Surprisingly, they often wrote home telling their relatives that life in Australia was not as dreadful as it had been painted and urging wives and sweethearts to come out. The most atrocious accounts of floggings and chain-gang servitude come from descriptions left by visitors, free settlers and army men – at least until Hughes comes to the specialist part of his study, the brutalities of Port Arthur, Macquarie Harbour and Norfolk Island.

The reader needs a strong stomach as Tasmania comes on to the stage. The chapter "To plough Van Diemen's Land" annotates the famous ballad it quotes from with embroideries of the lash, the iron-gang, solitary confinement, bushranging, cannibalism and sodomy (plus rectal gonorrhoea). And, above all, failure. Right from its first settlement at the beginning of the nineteenth century, Van Diemen's Land was marked out as a place of special punishment, even though it also attracted free settlers. Long after abolition, at the end of the century, when all that was left of the convicts' presence were a few "Old Crawlers" serving out their time, the economy was still faltering, lagging far behind the mainland. Hughes draws a convincing portrait of the notorious Colonel Sir George Arthur, an evangelical who had already run one prison colony in Belize, and whose atrocious régime was scarcely tempered by his upright character, though that kept him permanently in dispute with the colonists. At the height of transportation, in the 1820s and 30s, the convict population outnumbered the free, Macquarie Harbour, on Tasmania's bleak west coast, was an even more dreadful purgatory than Port Arthur, the ultimate security prison, separated from normality by a narrow isthmus permanently garrisoned by chained-up dogs. Here also child convicts were corrected at Point Puer, selected by Marcus Clarke for a heart-rending adolescent suicide pact in *For the Term of His Natural Life*. Its Latin name promised no punning relaxation.

Bad as Vandemonian life could be, it did not usually reach the pitch of frightfulness attained at Moreton Bay in its early years and Norfolk Island most of the time. Captain Patrick Logan turned the site of the future city of Brisbane into a *via triplex* of unbidded flogging. Dogan

was spared by Aborigines while waiting recall to Sydney. He was the first Australian tyrant to become a legend; immediately after his death, his image, erect on his horse, appeared, phantom-like, on the banks of the Brisbane river. A sense of the phantasmagoric seems to have pervaded Queensland ever since. Norfolk Island is at the heart of Hughes's exposition of "the System". He devotes over a hundred pages to the ebb and flow of brutality in this exemplary hell. One passage from the surviving account of his experiences by the Irishman Laurence Frayne is about as much as one can take at a time. "My shoulders", wrote Frayne,

were actually in a state of decomposition the stench of which I could not bear myself, how offensive then must I appear and smell to my companions in misery. In this state immediately after landing I was sent to carry Salt Beef on my back with the Salt Brine as well as pressure slinging my mutilated and mortified flesh up to Longridge (a station on Norfolk Island). I really longed for instant death.

Norfolk Island was a place of Miltonic reversal. There evil was good and good was evil, and its officers and soldiers assumed the smoky likeness of devils torturing the damned. It had been planned as such by the authorities from the beginning. Mutinies always failed and were followed by appalling reprisals. But to Norfolk Island came the one humane genius in convict history, Alexander Maconochie, whose Merit Marks system replaced pre-emptive floggings. A man could be given a hundred lashes for crying "Oh, My God" or merely being seen to smile on a chain-gang. Maconochie changed all this, but he lost Governor Gipps's support, and tried the patience of the Colonial Secretary in London, so he was recalled and Norfolk Island was left to crown its career of terror under the worst brute of all, John Giles Price, who moved with impunity among his cowed, despairing prisoners, a monacle in his eye.

There is a limit to the quantity of pain which the modern reader can absorb from the past. At the same time, it is very difficult to draw timely lessons from the Transportation System, or plot the track which the Australian spirit took after such an unhappy baptism. Perhaps, for the moment, it is enough to express our gratitude to Robert Hughes for casting this truthful shadow over the first eighty years of a country on the brink of its bicentenary. Looking at present-day materialism in Australia, Hughes writes, "nowhere in the world was the Victorian equation between wealth and virtue rammed home more brutally than in mid-nineteenth-century Australia". Might this be another of England's bequests to Australia, the darker side of the famous Antipodean hedonism? Hughes justly puts the blame for much of the monstrous treatment of convicts on to ideas prevalent at the time, of evil being an hereditary state of mind, and governments having a duty to rid society of a whole class tainted with a tendency to wickedness. Once New South Wales became the home of a rich gentleman class, the punishers in England were forced to ask themselves the question – "how did the creaked stock of English criminality produce such fresh green shoots in Australia?" Emerging Australians, their numbers swollen dramatically by Gold Rush hopefuls, in their turn halted their country with dithyrambs in which the convicts could expect to play no part:

Then to thee shall our hearts' purest homage be given,  
And the toast that succeeds be: 'The land, boys, we live in.'

It was the land itself which was fated to be the deliverer and healer. The reality, and even now the benison, of Australia is its cornucopian dimensions. I remember, as a boy of nine, watching from a window above Martin Place, Sydney, the all-day celebrations for the 150th anniversary of the Foundation of Australia. Float after float went past, recording Australia's teeming prosperity. And this was still the Depression. Life-size replicas of Governor Phillip's ships, the *Sirius* and the *Supply*, rode at anchor alongside warships of the Australian Navy at Garden Island. Next year, when Australia Day attains its second centenary, I suggest we observe two minutes' silence in memory of the convicts, now at peace in the land of their torment. Many went on to prosper and hand on the expectation of happiness to their children. It is the ghosts of the unshriven others we must propitiate.

John G. 10 10 10



# Clarity and the airy manner

Neil Berry

**LORD BYRON**  
*The Complete Poetical Works*  
 Edited by Jerome J. McGann  
 Volume Four: "The Prisoner of Chillon",  
 "Manfred", "The Lament of Tasso", "Beppo",  
 "Mazeppa", "The Prophecy of Dante",  
 "Marino Faliero".  
 568pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £50.  
 0198127561  
 Volume Five: "Don Juan"  
 771pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £60.  
 019812757X  
**JEROME J. MCGANN (Editor)**  
 Byron  
 1,080pp. Oxford University Press. £22.50  
 (paperback, £7.95).  
 0192541846  
**BERNARD BEATTY**  
*Byron's Don Juan*  
 239pp. Croom Helm. £22.50.  
 0709932671  
**NORMAN PAGE (Editor)**  
*Byron: Interviews and Recollections*  
 182pp. Macmillan. £25.  
 0333345991

With their bold typography, rigorous textual histories and copious, yet concise, notes, the latest two volumes of Jerome McGann's edition of Byron simply measure up to the high standards set by their predecessors. And in one practical respect they exceed them: the notes at the back now have running heads keying them back to the text and making them easier to circumnavigate. It is a pity that the books are both so astronomically priced.

Volume Four includes *The Prisoner of Chillon*, *Manfred*, *The Lament of Tasso*, *Beppo*, *Mazeppa*, *The Prophecy of Dante* and *Marino Faliero*. Volume Five is devoted to *Don Juan*. We can observe the process by which Byron shed the mask of the self-lacerating misanthropist to become in *Beppo* and *Don Juan* what Auden called the "master of the airy manner". We can also observe scholarly *parti pris* in action. Though he has now – for the Oxford Authors series – edited a capacious Byron selection, McGann's main endeavours have lent no support to the opinions of, for instance, Arnold and Auden, that Byron's massive and uneven output above all needs winnowing. His enthusiastic introduction (the book contains everything which the lay reader of Byron is likely to want) has no principle of selection to declare and could leave the impression that the selection itself forms only part of a great living poetic legacy.

McGann evidently takes greatest pleasure in *Don Juan*, which he unambiguously proclaims the "most important poem published in England between 1667 (when *Paradise Lost* was issued) and 1850 (when the *Prelude* finally appeared in print)". He sees it as a conscious attempt to explain critically the entire period stretching between 1789 and Byron's death in 1824 – a conviction which provides much of the basis for his claim to have superseded earlier editions of the poem, including the "epochal" "Variorum" edition of 1957 by T. G. Steffen and W. W. Pratt. McGann acknowledges the textual thoroughness of their work, but considers that they crucially failed to elucidate the political, social and literary background to the poem. Countering the still stubbornly rooted tendency to eternalize the Romantics, McGann, like Marilyn Butler, brings to the study of early nineteenth-century English literature a much greater insistence on the value of exploring and re-creating the contemporary context of books than has been usual. His notes for *Don Juan* set out, accordingly, to offer a fresh and systematic account of the poem's relationship to the circumstances of its production.

McGann perhaps overstates the case for regarding *Don Juan* as the definitive epic embodiment of the whole drama of Europe from the French Revolution to the Restoration. Additively, politics pervade the poem, just as they do nearly the whole literature of the time, but *Don Juan* is many things, including, notably, a commentary – often hilarious, if at bottom sombre – on human affairs, with roots in Montaigne and Rochefoucauld, and with aspirations to the status of lasting wisdom. Nevertheless, McGann is right to stress the

mythopoetic impulse behind the poem, the pressure it puts on readers to understand Byron's experience in world-historical terms – as in stanza 56 of Canto XI, where Byron likens the reception met by his post-exile publications to Napoleon's military reverses. And his contextual emphasis keeps disclosing new and arresting perspectives.

One of these is particularly enriching. Byron's literary and political antagonism to the Lake School, to Wordsworth, Southey and Coleridge in general, is familiar, though his attitude towards Coleridge in particular has seldom received much attention. It has been left to McGann to point out that Byron's hostile reading of Chapter Twenty-three of Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria* (late in 1817, at the time of *Don Juan*'s inception) seems to have provided him with the choice of Don Juan as hero of the poem (from Coleridge's critical remarks on the Don Juan tradition); with the idea of making a shipwreck central to Canto II (from Coleridge's critique of Bertram); and even with, as McGann puts it, the "impetus to respond to Coleridge's reactionary literary life – with its running denunciations of liberal and radical thought – via his own very different *Biographia Literaria*". To have pointed out hitherto unsuspected connections between two of the *magna opera* of the Romantic period, when so much criticism and commentary has already been lavished on them, is no mean achievement.

In textual terms, McGann's chief innovation is the relegation of Byron's prose preface ridiculing Wordsworth and Southey to the unincorporated stanzas and materials, which are here printed at the back of the Cantos to which they were meant to belong. McGann maintains that to place the Preface first, as Steffen and Pratt did, violates Byron's own intentions and forces an initial encounter with *Don Juan* through a document left in an incomplete draft state. In most respects, however, McGann's changes in the text are hardly such as to compel radical reassessment of the poem. It must be said, too, that for all their comprehensiveness, his notes do not altogether supplant the expanded commentary supplied by Steffen and Pratt for their 1973 Penguin edition of the Variorum. Inevitably, there are plenty of instances where McGann's annotation overlaps with theirs and where he has merely modified their suggestions. Owners of the Penguin *Don Juan* need not feel that the book is now redundant.

All the same, both in principle and in presentation, McGann's edition is a landmark. It has, pre-eminently, the virtue of clarity – a virtue which, McGann has remarked, Byron was himself dedicated to promoting as a cultu-

ral ideal. *Don Juan* stands, he believes, as a monument to intelligibility in poetry and as a warning to Byron's own and to succeeding ages against the solipsistic dangers inherent in the poetic theory and practice of Wordsworth and his ilk. So it is ironic, in a way which Byron would surely have relished, that this eloquent proponent of the limpid should have provoked such a baffling diversity of reactions and interpretations. The poet who, in Eliot's opinion, was a sonorous affirmer of commonplaces, was, in Wilson Knight's, an artist of near-Shakespearian genius and fecundity. Byron and his work will, we may be sure, remain controversial. *Byron's Don Juan* by Bernard Beatty advances the eccentric thesis that *Don Juan* is a religious poem, or was becoming one when Byron's early death brought it to a premature conclusion (*Don Juan*'s unfinished state is obviously a great asset to new interpreters of the poem). Beatty's discussion hinges on the improbable ascetic heroine, "prim, silent, cold Aurora Raby", who makes her debut in Canto XV. McGann's note on her suggests that she would have figured prominently in Juan's English misfortunes, according to the pattern established in Byron's own relations with his wife Annabella. To Beatty, by contrast, she represents a potential redemptress, a harbinger of "worlds beyond this world's perplexing waste" and a reflection, too, perhaps, of latent religiosity on Byron's own part.

Those who view Byron as a sceptic, if not a nihilist (that is, most of his readers), will find the notion of a converted Byron highly implausible – though on occasion Byron seems to have talked about religion earnestly enough. Included in the useful Byron volume in Macmillan's Interviews and Recollections series is the conversation with him recorded by Scott in which, after "smiling gravely", Byron allowed that he might indeed "retreat upon the Catholic faith". And the uncompromisingly atheistic Shelley worried that Byron, who had after all been brought up a Calvinist, might succumb to religious temptation. Yet, on the other hand, no sense of a nascent spirituality is conveyed by Dr Julius Millington's sober account (also in *Interviews and Recollections*) of Byron's last days. "I have exhausted", Millington reported Byron to have remarked, "all the nectar in the cup of life; it is time to throw the dregs away." Eschatological issues do not seem to have been on his mind.

Jerome McGann remarks that in the end Byron seems never to have died. It is to criticism and scholarship, though, that credit must go for keeping his work alive. Byron himself boasted that he would die time. If he is proving successful, part of the reason lies in his signal failure to tire his interpreters.

## The Italian connection

Thomas Crawford

**R. D. S. JACK**  
*Scottish Literature's Debt to Italy*  
 86pp. Italian Institute, Edinburgh/Edinburgh University Press. £6.  
 085245262

R. D. S. Jack's elegant little book is a useful contribution to the exploration of the cultural and linguistic relations between Scotland and Italy. It is a pendant to his much longer *Italian Influence in Scottish Literature* (1972), which ended with Walter Scott. The fourth chapter, taking more than a third of the book, is completely new and treats of Italian influences and themes in twentieth-century poets and novelists.

One cannot quarrel with Dr Jack's broad picture of Scottish-Italian literary relations: that there was very little reaction until what he calls "the first Renaissance in Scottish letters" from the time of James VI's "Castilian band" until the death of William Drummond of Hawthornden, who was its culmination; that the next high points were the broad cultural borrowings of Byron (Pulci and Alfieri), lessons about liberty and exile from Venice, Rome and Florence, and Scott (the Waverley novels relating Scotland to a clearly perceived European base, in which Italian material played a crucial part). James Thomson's undervalued poem, *The City of Dreadful Night*, is a late nineteenth-century

peak, but an isolated one, with both Dante and Leopardi drawn into the fabric of its melancholic vision. In the twentieth century, more Scottish writers have responded strongly to Italian life and letters than ever before.

My only qualification concerns the eighteenth century. By emphasizing so strongly imaginative literature, Jack underplays the role of Italy for the historians, biographers and philosophers of the Enlightenment. He mentions Boswell's "famous visit to Corsica", but not the contemporary impact of the published *Account*; Adam Smith's knowledge of Italian historians, but not Hume's, and their possible contribution to his whole attitude to history. More, too, could have been made of the influence of Italian music; the vernacular poets' opposition to "vile Italian tricks" surely reflected class divisions as well as assertions of nationalism.

Jack is at his best when analysing and commenting on texts, expertly highlighting both the gravity of tone which dominates Edwin Morgan's translations from Leopardi and the ebullient earthiness of Robert Garioch's translations of Belli's dialect sonnets into "vernacular Scots". Four of the novelists of whom Jack comments – Norman Douglas, Compton Mackenzie, Muriel Spark and Eric Linklater – are all well known outside Scotland. The fifth, A. N. Wilson, perhaps is not, and it is good to have *The Death of Men*, based on the abduction and murder of Aldo Moro, placed in the context of the Italy of these latter novelists.

## After-seasons

Pat Rogers

**JAMES THOMSON**  
*"Liberty", "The Castle of Indolence" and other poems*  
 Edited by James Sambrook  
 452pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £60.  
 0198127596

After his early success with *The Seasons*, it was downhill almost all the way for James Thomson. *The Castle of Indolence* had had some afterlife; it was well known abroad, and translated into Italian (a fact James Sambrook doesn't note). It is one of the very few poems collected here ever to have been treated in a decent edition – that by A. D. McKillop (1961). For the rest, Sambrook's volume stands even further ahead of the field than his excellent text of *The Seasons* (reviewed in the TLS of October 2, 1981). Whether this is enough to win new readers for the poet is doubtful, since what made *The Seasons* a favourite for so long (as with the essay of Lamb) is exactly what precludes popularity today. But everything that could be done, Sambrook has performed with outstanding skill.

The heart of the matter is to be found in the longest work here, *Liberty*, published in the instalments in 1735–6. This ought to have been the triumphant sequel to *The Seasons*, and indeed there is nothing wrong with the concept. Sambrook indicates that in choosing this Thomson "misdirected his talent", and evidence lies in his own bibliographical data – the publisher reduced the main print run from 3,000 to 1,000 copies between first and last sections. Yet Thomson's idiom had always been one of affluence and the grand pompous style of Whig panegyric; there was room, too, in *Liberty* for his vein of cosmic hyperbole. But things began to go wrong, at a local level, from the very start. Part One would be better if it followed Parts Two and Three. It was a mistake to let the goddess take on so much of the first-person work, and there are altogether too many signs of Pope's dominance in Thomson's poetic sets. The final "Prospect" is stuffed with echoes of *Windsor-Forest*; and even when Thomson anticipates Pope's lines on *Vine and Vice* from the "Epilogue to the Satires", he has the linguistic cursor in the mode of blasphe- mous panegyric of the Prince of Wales, instead of Pope's crushing satiric mode. There are a few impressive passages, as on antique sculpture, but Greece and Rome resolutely fail to spring into historical life – even the juiciest anecdotes from Plutarch become stiff, exemplary case studies in this context.

The juvenilia are in artistic terms juvenile, and the minor poems deserve that epithet without exception. Sambrook has added to the known haul and made good use of previous scholarship, notably the materials first published in Douglas Grant's biography (1951). But that leaves not much more than *The Castle of Indolence*; and here the editor is reduced to echoing Donald Greene's reading of the poem as an expression of "the self-suffering brought about by that paralysis of the will known down the ages variously as sloth, accidie, indolence, and neurosis". Surely *accidie* and *neurosis* are far from synonymous, and Thomson's key concepts have as much to do with the art of preserving health through a physical régime as with psychiatry.

We are told that the plays remain to be edited by another hand. Whoever takes on this task will have to possess both immense learning and great critical tact to produce a text to rival the present edition, where even a note on the Sybarites makes for delightful reading, and where the routine duties of describing publication history affords the editor opportunity to enlighten and entertain. If an edition could rescue a poet, this would be the one to do it.

*Essays by Divers Hands: Being the transactions of the Royal Society of Literature, New Series, Volume XLIV*, edited by A. N. Wilson (200pp. Woodbridge: Boydell Press. £9.95, 085115303), includes contributions from Dorothy Carrington on "Boswell's Corsica", Allan Massie on "James Hogg and Sir Walter Scott: A study in friendship", Betty Askwith on "After Jane Austen: Some nineteenth-century lady novelists", and Victoria Glendinning on "The Book Review: The last and the first?"

## Doing without utopias: An interview with Václav Havel

The Czech playwright, Václav Havel, was one of the founding authors of the Charter 77 movement which this month celebrates its tenth anniversary.

What exactly do you mean when you say that conditions in Czechoslovakia are totalitarian?

I'd like to emphasize at the outset that I'm no political scientist, but a writer who observes and gathers impressions of the world around me. But there is an evident difference between dictatorships in the classical sense – what some describe as "authoritarian rule" – and totalitarianism. In the various dictatorships of the Third World, for instance, a small ruling group violently dominates and tyrannizes society. Compared with those dictatorships, our totalitarian system is less openly or directly based on violence, even though it certainly rules society by means of an enormous police force, army and bureaucracy.

Totalitarianism is a system which absorbs the whole of society. It enters every vein and artery of the social organism, usurping and controlling all aspects of human life. Nazism is often cited as an example of totalitarianism, and I understand that the term was first used in connection with fascism in general. Yet fascism strikes me as a half-way stage between dictatorship and totalitarianism as we experience it here. In order to distinguish our system, I once employed the term "post-totalitarianism". In the system we live in, you won't normally encounter either street battles between citizens and the police or direct violence, brutality or terrorism from the régime. What one does encounter, however, is something that George Orwell saw, and that is more dangerous in certain respects. From morning to night, everything every ordinary citizen does is in some way interfered with by the system. The régime leaves its mark on everything, from the way housing estates are built to the patterns of television programming. You can even see this manipulation in apparently trivial things, such as the opening and closing times of restaurants, which are conceived with a view to discouraging people from sitting around too long, and encouraging them to get off home to their television screens to watch the messages broadcast by the centralized media.

You say that totalitarian régimes are considerably less violent than military dictatorships. Many people in the West sense this difference, and consider it important. They might be inclined to say: "But compared with harsh and bloodthirsty dictatorships such as Pinochet's Chile, or governments of the South African kind, the type of régime you are describing is more civilized. At least it has some respect for human life." What would you say to this?

The violence of our system will never be seen by a tourist or visitor. It is the kind of violence they would see only if they got a job at CKD Engineering Works in Prague and had to travel to work every morning and back home every afternoon. They would then be in a position to understand what it means to earn the usual rate for the job there, and to be dependent on superiors. They would see how those who pursue political careers receive ever higher salaries. They would discover that no matter how well they worked, their pay would remain the same. They would realize just how much they were at the mercy of the all-powerful bureaucracy, so that for every little thing they have to approach some official or other. They would observe the gradual destruction of the human spirit, of basic human dignity. They would see how, from the nursery to the old people's home, people live their lives in a state of permanent humiliation. These are features of the totalitarian system which can neither be filmed by television cameras nor easily explained to outsiders. In order to be seen they have to be experienced.

You've written a great deal about other aspects of this "invisible violence". For instance, in a recent essay you point to the paradoxical way in which the totalitarian system requires its subjects to be both victims of the system, and its cynical accomplices. What do you mean by that?

The domination of a large group of powerless people by a small powerful group has long

since ceased being totalitarianism's most typical feature. Nowadays, what is typical is the domination of one part of each of ourselves by another part of ourselves. It's as if the régime had an outpost inside every single citizen. Consequently, "the régime" is hard to locate precisely within a particular institution or social group. Everyone supports it and helps create it – by mutely acquiescing in its version of reality, by voting in formal elections, and by observing its various rituals and ceremonies – but at the same time everyone finds themselves in opposition.

I'll give you two examples. As you can see, I'm in the process of having this flat adapted and reconstructed. The bricklayers and plumbers who come here are always moaning about "them" – the régime. They grumble almost constantly about the way things are. My second example is a deputy minister of state – someone who belongs to the ruling group of the state bureaucracy, and who might be regarded as one of the "them" that everybody grumbles about. However, talk to this deputy minister in private and he'll say exactly the same thing as the bricklayers and plumbers. You'll find he also moans about the way things are – in fact more so because he is better informed about the situation. If he happens to be an official working in the field of foreign trade, he will be very well informed about the enormous gap between productivity levels in the Western and Eastern economies. He'll set out an irrefutable case against "the system", based on countless facts, yet from early morning to four in the afternoon he sits in his office and performs his official duties, creating the very system against which he himself verbally rebels.

In 1941, Orwell wrote that the really frightening thing about totalitarianism is not that it commits atrocities of various kinds, but that it tries to define and control the past as well as the future by destroying truth. Is the destruction of truth another aspect of the invisible domination you're describing?

I regard that particular observation of Orwell's as very profound. On various occasions I have spoken about the importance of living authentically "in the truth" – and in the face of various risks – not being afraid of speaking one's mind. Yet when I talk to foreign journalists and other Western visitors I'm often asked questions that suggest that this idea is stuffy, moralistic and old-fashioned, as if stressing "truth" smacked of the pulpit. What these visitors fail to understand is that in our system all information has been centrally controlled for years and decades now, with the result that people's minds are manipulated in a certain way. This destruction of the truth is far more obvious in the Soviet Union than in Czechoslovakia. In Russia, for instance, there's no real tradition of democracy and the system has been in existence for much longer than in Czechoslovakia. It seems as if the totalitarian system there has managed to create its own "totalitarian people" – people who have never had an opportunity of comparing two or more different points of view, and who are therefore gradually processed and manipulated to conform or adapt to the government's own official interpretation of reality. This official interpretation consequently merges with reality. A general and all-embracing lie begins to predominate; people begin adapting to it, and everyone in some part of their lives compromises with the lie or coexists with it. Under these conditions, to assert the truth, to behave authentically by breaking through the all-englobing web of lies – in spite of everything, including the risk that one might find oneself up against the whole world – is an act of extraordinary political importance. It is only to those without experience of such a situation that the emphasis on truth, and being true to oneself, must sound like some strange kind of old-fashioned preachiness.

Your Western readers often express surprise that you refuse to identify uncritically with the image of the West as the bastion of freedom, openness and democracy. You seem to be suspicious of both Western democracies and Soviet-type systems. Do you believe that the two systems are not fundamentally different?

It is seventeen years since I was last in the West, so I am not well qualified to pass critical judgment on Western political systems and

ways of life. None the less, I can't help concluding from my own impressions and studies that the crisis in today's world is not just a matter of Soviet-style totalitarianism. Its roots go deeper. I don't share the view of certain Western politicians that Communism is some kind of painful ulcer in the world's stomach, and that all that is required is a surgical operation to put things right and make us all happy again. I don't think it's quite so simple.

Are you saying that totalitarian régimes such as Czechoslovakia are a possible shape of things to come in the West?

In my view, Soviet totalitarianism is an extreme manifestation – a strange, cruel and dangerous species – of a deep-seated problem which equally finds expression in advanced Western society. These systems have in common something that the Czech philosopher Václav Bělohradský calls the "eschatology of the impersonal", that is, a trend towards impersonal power and rule by mega-machines or colossi that escape human control. I believe the world is losing its human dimension. Self-propelling mega-machines, juggernauts of impersonal power such as large-scale enterprises and faceless governments, represent the greatest threat to our present-day world. In the final analysis, totalitarianism is no more than an extreme expression of this threat.

What are the causes of this situation?

It has something to do with the fact that we live in the first atheist civilization in human history. People have ceased to respect any so-called higher metaphysical values – the Absolute, something higher than themselves, something mysterious. I am not talking about a personal God, necessarily. I'm referring to whatever is absolute, transcendental, supra-human. These fundamental considerations once represented a support, a horizon for people, but now they have been lost. The paradox is that in losing them we are losing our grip on civilization, which is running out of control. As soon as humanity declared itself to be the supreme ruler of the universe – at that moment, the world began to lose its human dimensions.

You have written that the issue of capitalism or socialism is a thing of the past – an obsolete choice from the nineteenth century. Is this belief connected with your concern about the growth of impersonal, power-hungry organizations?

Yes. I believe that a century or so after Marx, the world is a very different place. The issue of whether firms are privately owned or nationalized or "socially owned" is no longer the basic question. What is more important is whether their scale is human or not. The way I see it, enormous companies like Shell or IBM are – fundamentally speaking – not very different from so-called socialist enterprises. Of course, these companies are more efficient and profitable and their productivity is higher. But they closely resemble big socialist firms in that both are colossal machines from which the human dimension is increasingly lacking.

You have expressed regrets about the often bitter battles in Western Europe and North America to use your name for Rightist as well as Leftist purposes. Is this because you consider yourself in the centre of the political spectrum? Or are these categories no longer meaningful for you?

First, I dislike being categorized. I don't like people laying claims to me and classifying me under some particular banner or other. I have no pretensions to being correct all the time, but I always make a conscientious effort to think things out as best I can. What matters is the truth rather than the particular sect, party or ideology to which I might be assigned. In a way, the very act of forming a political grouping forces one to start playing a power game, instead of giving truth priority. More deeply, the fact is that in the light of our experience of totalitarianism, we don't find that the traditional political spectrum, as it still exists in the West, expresses the fundamental issues. Looked at from over here it appears rather superficial.

Your dislike of dogmatism and the importance you place on the principle of living as a human

being in the truth are reminiscent of some key themes in the life and work of the philosopher, social critic and first President of the Czechoslovak republic, Tomáš Masaryk. To what extent do you see yourself in the democratic tradition of Masaryk?

As a child, I grew up in an atmosphere charged with Masaryk's humanism. We had all of Masaryk's and Capek's works on our bookshelves at home. My father knew the authors personally. I read them all at a very early age, and they formed a background for my subsequent development. While there are many areas where I disagree with him fundamentally, such as his positivist belief in progress, I do profoundly share the feelings behind his constant references to transcendence, and his insistence that democracy as a political system and as an expression of social justice must have some sort of transcendental basis or horizon.

He was one of the greatest figures of modern Czechoslovak history, a fascinating man who combined philosophical vision with experience and political tact. He truly was the founder of the modern Czechoslovak state. He was both bold and firm, while displaying an admirable and subtle capacity for tactical politics. He was a figure of undeniable greatness, and it is a shame that the world outside Czechoslovakia has forgotten him.

During your last spell in prison you managed to write Letters to Olga, in which you developed at great length a very complex philosophy of Being which is clearly indebted to Heidegger and Levinas. Why did you turn to these authors?

Prison challenges you to think more deeply about basic philosophical questions to do with your existence. Of course, throughout my life I've enjoyed reading philosophy, but because I always had plenty of other things to do, such as writing plays and getting involved in different activities, I didn't study the subject systematically. And then, all of a sudden, when I found myself deprived of any opportunity of writing

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or of initiating, of creating or getting involved in anything, as well as obliged to do routine mechanical work and to abide by the stupidities of prison drill, I started to look inward, and increasingly felt the need to ponder life's basic questions. The philosophers you mentioned helped satisfy this need.

I had no opportunity of reading any literature, or studying anything. So I started to put together my own ideas. This helped me come to terms with prison existence; it lent some meaning to my life. Every week, while engaged in prison work, drill and various duties, I'd try to sort out my thoughts and feelings, so that when Saturday came I could quickly write them down on the four pages we were permitted for our letter home, bearing in mind the complications of prison censorship. I never had the space or time to say exactly what was on my mind. Everything was written in these circumstances. I lived for the next letter. I constantly thought about it. For me it represented intellectual, spiritual and existential fulfilment, an effort to express my feelings about those matters and to explain them to myself. It was a work of self-preservation.

*Throughout your writing you express severe reservations about utopian visions: "radiant tomorrows", as you call them.*

In this country we have lived through the failure of one great utopia, and this has given us a very sceptical view of utopianism in general. Utopianism is a typically intellectual phenomenon – the greatest revolutionaries were all intellectuals. It is an arrogant attempt by human reason to plan life. But it is not possible to force life to conform to some abstract blueprint. Life is something unfathomable, ever-changing, mysterious, and every attempt to confine it within an artificial, abstract structure inevitably ends up homogenizing, regimenting, standardizing and destroying life, as well as curtailing everything that projects beyond, overflows or falls outside the abstract project. What is a concentration camp, after all, but an attempt by utopians to dispose of those elements which don't fit in? Lately, our world has seen some telling examples of the failure of utopias, such as Pol Pot's Cambodia. What was that but a cruel, extreme, tragic and terrifying example of what happens when intellectuals lose all respect for life's richness and heterogeneity, for its immanence, for its own particular laws, when they choose to give arrogant credence to their own reason and their own ideas, which are supposed to be superior, more important and better than life itself, when these ideas are transformed into a doctrine and when, finally, they seek to implement that doctrine by making life conform to it? The outcome in Pol Pot's case was that a third of the nation was murdered.

*But without modestly utopian schemes for more political democracy and greater civil liberties and social justice, we in the West would be condemned to accepting the status quo. And in totalitarian systems – as your fellow Charterist Milan Šimečka has pointed out – wouldn't a life without utopias be horrible? Wouldn't life be reduced to hopelessness, despair and resignation to the daily corruption and absurdity? Don't you engage in some modest utopian scheming – as in Letters to Olga, where you speak of the need of an "existential revolution", for the strengthening of human qualities such as love, sympathy, tolerance, understanding, solidarity and friendship?*

One must distinguish between, on the one hand, a state of openness towards mysteriously changing and always rather elusive and never quite attainable ideals such as truth and morality, and, on the other hand, an unequivocal identification with a detailed plan for implementing those ideals which in the end becomes self-justifying. I believe – and this is something missing from Šimečka's article about utopias – that there is a fine difference between striving for particular ideals, and creating a blueprint for implementing them. A utopia is really the materialization of an ideal – and is obviously easier and more convenient to deal with. At the same time, it is more dangerous, because the moment that we put all our faith and trust in a specific project for implementing them, we lose touch with the ideals themselves.

*We've already spoken about the importance of defending truth under totalitarian conditions. So I'd like to ask how you see the relationship between truth and art, broadly understood. You are a staunch defender of the autonomy of art from politics. And yet you have strongly criticized what you call "the sectarian view of parallel culture": the belief that officially permitted art is always duplicitous and bankrupt, a contradiction in terms, whereas unofficial art – produced on typewriters and circulated in samizdat, or performed or exhibited in private studios, apartments and country barns – is authentic art. That's quite a surprising thing to say, considering the nonsense that often passes for culture in official circles today in Czechoslovakia. How do you distinguish "genuine" or "truthful" art?*

That is tantamount to asking what is the secret of art. There is no mathematical or scientific way of defining it. Art also defies conceptual language. If art could be defined in conceptual terms, then we wouldn't need it. We could communicate using concepts. Take that painting on the wall. It was done by Mikuláš Medek. For me it is authentic; I feel in it a seriousness, an earnest search for certain spiritual phenomena that exist somewhere on the frontiers between dream and reality, for certain elusive archetypal forms, a sort of search for truth of form, authenticity of material, and so on. But how can one tell, actually? You could just as easily find it specious.

None the less, despite this element of mystery and uncertainty, we have the duty of making distinctions and judgments. I personally discover qualities that I find valuable and credible in different places – mostly in the so-called "second", independent or parallel culture, but also in the world of permitted art, chiefly on the fringes of official culture – in little theatres, suburban galleries, the occasional concert, or in the odd film situated on the borders between what is permitted and what is banned. What matters to me is whether the art is of merit and not the "zone" in which it occurs.

*Czechoslovakian theatre seems able to survive and grow despite various forms of political repression. There's a long history of this, stretching from the Austro-Hungarian Empire, through the Nazi occupation, to the Communist period after the coup-de-Prague of 1948. Are there signs today that theatre is again an independent force, either as part of a growing parallel culture or in what Josef Škvorecký has called the "grey zone", which belongs neither to the State nor the recognized opposition?*

Roughly speaking, there are three types of theatres in Czechoslovakia. First, there are the official "stone theatres", in which one rarely comes across anything noteworthy. Of far greater interest, secondly, are various small theatres. While professional or semi-professional, they are on the fringe of the official culture. Examples include the Theatre on a String [Divadlo na provázku], the Hana Theatre [Hanačské divadlo], the Fringe Theatre [Divadlo na okraji] and the Ypsilonka. In a certain sense they represent the dynamic element in today's theatre world: they express the atmosphere of the times, at least partially. Alongside them, thirdly, there are amateur companies of still younger people, mostly in their twenties. They are without doubt a noteworthy and important phenomenon. What will survive of them and grow into something of more lasting worth is hard to estimate. The main point is that scope exists for such ferment, and that this ferment is taking place precisely in the "grey zone" to which you referred: particularly the Jazz Section of the Musicians' Union, which has recently been subject to a vicious attack by the régime. The Jazz Section is virtually a symbol of the "grey zone".

*Your plays are today officially forbidden in Czechoslovakia. This must be very painful.*

I find it very trying. It is worse than when a novelist or poet is prevented from publishing in their homeland, since theatre is generally more bound up with the here and now. I mean, it always emerges out of a particular social and spiritual situation and is projected back into it. To put it simply, theatre needs a public. When a play remains a mere script, it is only a very

half-finished. I have been deprived of the basic conditions of theatre production for the past seventeen years, and this has not made it easy for my writing. I try simply not to accept my situation. I write as if my plays could still be performed at the Theatre on the Balustrade, and as if my contemporaries were there to watch them.

*As a playwright, you've never been interested in a political career. But you've been dragged into politics. You participated in the dramatic events of the Prague Spring – and you talked to Alexander Dubček for several hours about how Czechoslovakia ought to be run. More recently, you've described this period of reform Communism as a dreadful hotch-potch that satisfied neither the Czechoslovak public nor the Kremlin. Would you elaborate?*



Everyone, including myself, was euphoric about what was happening. We started to breathe freely and we were free to meet. Fear dissipated, various taboos fell away, and all sorts of social conflicts and interests could be voiced out loud. However, my joy was also mixed with feelings of uncertainty, which plagued me, and many others, more and more with the realization of just how embarrassing these developments were to the State leadership. All of a sudden, they enjoyed general support and spontaneous sympathy, something they had never known before, since they were accustomed to support organized from above. While they sympathized with the social groundswell, they also feared it. As a consequence, the political leadership tended to do no more than trot along in the wake of events, instead of guiding and protecting society. They kept on telling themselves that they would somehow manage to explain it convincingly to the Soviets in private; that they would manage to keep society on a leash; and that, in the end, the Soviets would have to understand the situation and give their consent. As a result, they concealed their differences with the Soviets, failed to heed the warning signals, and succumbed to the illusion that they would somehow cope with the developments. The hastily produced Action Programme of April 1968 mirrored all these contradictions.

*Many Western politicians responsible for directing foreign policy towards Eastern Europe seem to regard this small-scale moral activity in the shadows of the State as unrealistic.*

*The reality is that people in the West seem to expect the Charter to be an independent peace movement, an ecological movement, a substitute for public opinion, a source of publishing activity, and a partner for social democratic or conservative political parties. The Charter is treated sometimes as though it were some alternative Czechoslovakian government. We are burdened with various political roles which in the West are borne by scores or hundreds of different organizations and institutions. A handful of Prague stockers and caretakers are required in the little spare time they have to assume all these different political roles. If they are so unrealistic, why are they obliged to spend their time from morning to night in talks with foreign visitors? Why are they regarded by different diplomatic delegations to Czechoslovakia as the only people worth speaking to in this country apart from the government? How did they achieve this power?*

*You've had a long-running controversy with Milan Kundera about the potential power of the powerless under totalitarian conditions. Kundera doubts the efficacy of the type of independent citizens' initiatives you've been describing. His doubts resurface in The Unbearable Lightness of Being, when someone refuses to sign a petition in support of political prisoners. The reader is told that signing petitions is futile; and that it doesn't help, but possibly may worsen the prisoners' situation. Kundera's character*

anything that serves to cloud personal responsibility, or rewards anyone with privileges for their devotion to a particular power-oriented group.

But something more important worries me about that original article. I saw myself then as a writer who was a witness to the times. As you say, I had no intention of becoming a politician, in the sense of someone who goes about the practical business of putting the world right. In my view, however, proposals to found political parties should come from people who are genuinely disposed to found them – and that wasn't true of me.

*You have said that you favour a type of "anti-politics" as a remedy for impersonal, manipulative power. Would you explain what you mean?*

People take this too seriously. When I first used the term it was no more than a hand expression in a particular situation. It was a way of trying to say succinctly that under totalitarian conditions – though not confined to them alone – an action that has no ambitious political power can have surprisingly political effects, the significance of which are long-term, and greater than the effects of so-called "political" actions within the realms of power.

Charter 77 illustrates what I mean. The Charter is made up of a small number of citizens who have no weapons, no bureaucracy, no mass political party, no ambitions for power and who therefore would seem to be insignificant from the point of view of Realpolitik or administrative politics. But the fact is that the Charter has an influence far in excess of the number of its signatories or supporters. It manages to influence the entire sphere of social consciousness which, normally speaking, is subject only to manipulation by the régime. The enormous campaign unleashed by the régime against the Charter at the time of its creation, and the millions of crowns spent since then on fighting and trying to suppress it, could not possibly be explained without acknowledging the political impact of what was seemingly a "non-political" action. In an essay, "Politics and Conscience", I tried to examine this idea of anti-politics in a broader context. I tried, if you like, to sketch out an ideal sort of politics whose determining factor is people's conscience; in other words, a type of practical morality governed by certain basic existential and ethical imperatives. That essay grew out of our experience here and I'd hate it to be mistaken for some kind of doctrine. It was nothing of the sort, but rather an attempt to describe a phenomenon which observers from outside sometimes have difficulty in understanding.

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*plains that the real motive of petitioners is to delude themselves into thinking that they still have some influence on history; and that, since everything has been lost, the petitioners are actually parasites on the misfortunes of the oppressed. You objected to similar views expressed by Kundera in a well-known debate in the late 1960s. Do you still find his views unacceptable?*

I think his image of a Europe raped by Asia – a Europe which is a spiritual graveyard maintained by governments of forgetting – and his idea of history as an inexhaustible store of cruel jokes, are linked with his belief that everything here is just as it was at the beginning of the 1970s, and that petitions like the one he mocks in the novel you mentioned are therefore no more than desperate and tragic gestures by has-beens who have no other more meaningful outlet. Kundera is correct to say that every petition and even every signature is subject to the danger he mocks. For that reason alone, I cannot take umbrage at his derision, especially considering that it is part of a novel. My disagreement with him lies elsewhere. He fails – and almost refuses – to see a less obvious and more hopeful side of the same issue. He seems to be trapped by his own scepticism, incapable of admitting that there are occasions when it makes sense to display civic courage, even if it makes one look ridiculous. I well understand his feelings. Psychologically speaking, total scepticism of Kundera's kind is a natural outcome of losing one's enthusiastic illusions.

*Would you explain why you think this cynicism is reinforced by his view of history?*

Yes. At the time of my original argument with Kundera in 1969, what I didn't like was the fact that he and others began to explain the Soviet occupation and our government's capitulation as part of our historical lot or "natural destiny". The outcome of the events was presented as if it were a cause. I've no objection to drawing historical parallels or conjecturing about the meaning of history. And I fully understand and respect the frustration of former Communists about the way things turned out. But I don't like the way they tried to soften the blow. In Kundera's texts, there is something of that capitulation evident in the fellow who once thought he held history's steering wheel in his hands. When he sensed that history was proceeding in a direction he didn't intend, he leapt to the conclusion that no one was holding the steering wheel any more. Kundera's image of history as a deity capable of deceiving and destroying us – or, at best, playing tricks on us – looks to me like an over-extrapolation from his own disappointment. In my view, history isn't elsewhere, it's here with us. We all make history: Kundera in his novels and interviews, the Charists in their petitions. Our everyday deeds, good or bad, are its building blocks. History is to blame for history. Life doesn't lie outside history, nor does history exist outside of life.

*In Letters to Olga you draw a parallel between the careless and wasteful consumerism of urban picknickers littering the banks of a country pond with their leftover sausages and mustard, and the junk left behind on the moon by successive Russian and American astronauts. How sympathetic are you to the style and themes of what is known in the West as "green politics"?*

I am not fully enough informed about the specific policies of the green parties or ecological movements in various countries to be able to analyse or comment on them in detail. But the green movements seem, here and there, to have brought to the surface issues which have been neglected or downplayed by the major traditional political parties: issues which concern the meaning of life, such as whether there is any sense in the constant drive for increased production when it is to the detriment of future generations. This trend, as well as these movements' proclaimed non-ideological stance and their advocacy of non-violence, are close to my way of thinking. I am aware that they are young movements, which means that they are often very chaotic, confused and naive, and possibly forced to go through all the usual afflictions. Yet I can well imagine them throwing the established political scene in Western countries into disarray.

*In Western Europe, the Chernobyl accident has given some impetus to these movements. It has also increased the level of public uncertainty about governments' deep commitment to nuclear power. Even the nuclear industry itself has seemed less sure in its step. What has been the public response to the Chernobyl accident in Czechoslovakia?*

In a country where there is no public-opinion research and no free press, it's only possible to talk about "public opinion" with a degree of poetic licence. But as far as I could judge, there was, on the one hand, quite an angry reaction among people – unusually so, considering that there has not been a tradition of ecological concern here in past decades, at least not officially; though not enough to give rise to public protest. The other type of reaction, horrifying to Western visitors, took the form of various Chernobyl jokes in the self-preservation tradition of Czech humour.

*Gorbachev has impressed many people in the West with his different style of leadership. Some even think, or hope, that he will turn out to be a Russian Kennedy. How significant is the "Gorbachev course" for Czechoslovakia? Is there a possibility that it may foster important reforms? Or is this course likely to be blocked by hard-line Party forces? Or do you think the "Gorbachev course" is actually nothing new?*

He has not been in power long enough for us to be able to draw any definite conclusions. In principle, I don't exclude the possibility of a more enlightened man assuming power in the Soviet Union and carrying out reforms and humanizing the system gradually. So far, there is not enough evidence to indicate that Gorbachev is that man. Concerning his popularity in the West, I am rather shocked to find that the so-called "realist" politicians, who mock us dreamers fighting for human rights, for our lack of realism, allow themselves to be charmed by a few seductive glances in their direction from a gentleman who plays to the cameras. I find it more terrifying than the prospect of a few more Pershing rockets aimed in our direction.

*In your 1975 open letter to President Husák, you wrote: "Slowly but surely, we are losing the sense of time. We begin to forget what happened when, what came earlier and what later, and the feeling that it really doesn't matter overwhelms us." Would you still write this today, of conditions in Czechoslovakia?*

No major changes have taken place, the government's policies have not altered, but none the less some important things have happened. For example, there has been a growth of independent writing, so that now dozens of samizdat journals are being produced, whereas not one existed in those days. Independent culture as a whole has mushroomed. There are also many other signs of movement in the consciousness of society. Time is beginning to become evident again, as if we were rejoining history. These are the smallest of clues, and I don't overestimate their significance. The situation could change for the worse. All the same in spiritual terms and in its consciousness, our society is better off.

*You are often asked by Western visitors, "What can we do to help your situation?" You have written that although the question is well-meaning, it contains a built-in misunderstanding. What did you mean by that?*

I was trying to stress that when our friends in the West help us, it's not just a matter of humanitarian assistance or charitable action – a case of the better-off helping someone in difficulties. Rather, these acts should derive from a realization – as indeed I think is happening more and more – that our destinies are linked and indivisible, and that in helping us, people in the West are also helping themselves. If one of us becomes caught in some sort of misfortune, everyone else is drawn into it, willy-nilly. This is certainly true in Europe. I believe that the problems facing Western Europe today cannot be solved unless the problems facing Eastern Europe are also solved. That is why the solidarity extended to us by people in Western Europe is not for our benefit alone.

*Interview conducted by Erica Blair and translated by A. G. Brails.*

## Vanished consolations

Roger Scruton

JOSEF ŠKVORECKÝ  
Dvořák in Love  
Translated by Paul Wilson  
322pp. Chatto and Windus. £10.95.  
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Mírál  
576pp. Rozmuvy, 18 Church Hill, Purley, Surrey CR2 3QN. £7.50.  
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0946352313 X

*Dvořák in Love* is a far weaker book than *The Engineer of Human Souls*. Like its predecessor, it is both longer than it should be, and composed with more concern for abundance than for style. Since emigrating to Canada, indeed, Josef Škvorecký seems to have become increasingly loquacious, filling his books with streams of chatter and with the kind of redundant detail normally associated with Thomas Pynchon, John Barth, and the "creative writing" school.

Dvořák is picked out in a series of tableaux, seen through various eyes. In the character of the composer, Škvorecký attempts to synthesize his own feelings for two separate homelands – for the old Bohemia of faith, festival and *beseda*, and for the spacious nothingness of America, in which anything can happen and nothing lasts for long. The Bohemia and America of Dvořák's day were more lovely than their modern counterparts, and Škvorecký loses no opportunity to describe their vanished consolations. Dvořák himself, however, is perceived only dimly and uncertainly, and the love mentioned in the title (the master's platonic passion for his sister-in-law) is the least real of the many overlapping motifs. More successful are the subsidiary portraits – for instance, of the black violinist, Will Marion Cook, and of the wealthy head-hunter, Jeanette Thurber.

The novel's most majestic theme is that of a fatal encounter between the high culture of Central Europe, and the ingenious virginity of the American muse. However, it is a theme which, despite constant intravenous feeding, never comes to life. The style and design of the book are so loose and disorderly that it is at times hard to consider the work in terms other than those appropriate to the blockbusters of Irving Stone. The fault does not lie with translator Paul Wilson, but with Škvorecký himself, who has allowed garrulity to prevail over aesthetic sense.

*Mírál* is almost as garrulous: but it is far more interesting. The novel presents a three-tiered narrative, set in Communist Czechoslovakia, and propelled by an urgent personal concern. Real and famous people walk through its pages, which abound in gossip, scandal and veiled accusations, of the kind that go straight to the heart of an émigré reader. The title refers to an actual event – a "miracle", set up during the Stalinist period, in the church of a weak and ailing priest, as part of a carefully managed persecution of the Catholic Church. (A statue was made to sway from side to side, by a secret mechanism, during critical moments of worship or prayer.) The priest in whose church the device had been planted – Father Doufal – was arrested and threatened. The Communists promised him that they would free him, but also a part in a film which (using the "miracle" as its subject) was to expose the imposture of the Catholic faith. The Communists thereby hoped to win the sympathy of the people for their persecutions, which were to cost the lives of some ten thousand priests, monks and nuns.

As it happens, a true miracle occurred. Father Doufal, for all his weakness, refused to confess, and held out to the end, dying under torture. The Communists were forced to use an actor to play his part in their film, and what was to have been a revelation of the fraudulent character of the Church became instead a vivid revelation of the fraudulent character of Communism that the film had to be quickly

withdrawn from circulation. Father Doufal was henceforth revered as a martyr: which indeed he was.

Škvorecký's novel consists of three narratives, one set in the 1950s, another during the Prague Spring, and a third in the wake of the Soviet invasion. Each narrative involves people whose lives have been in some way touched by the false Communist miracle, and also by the true miracle of Father Doufal's faith and martyrdom. *Mírál* was first published fifteen years ago, and is now issued in Britain for the first time. I hope that it will find a translator, so that Škvorecký's more chatty idiom will not be associated only with *Dvořák in Love*.

It is characteristic of Škvorecký's outgoing nature that he should be internationally known not only as a novelist, but also as a patriot in exile, a propagandist, and the founder of the most successful Czech émigré publishing house in existence – the 68 Press in Toronto. Ivan Klíma, who is of the same generation as Škvorecký, chose not to emigrate in the wake of the Soviet invasion, and he now lives in Prague, subjected to constant harassment, publishing his works in tiny samizdat editions. Klíma's literary preoccupations tend to be as minute and personal as Škvorecký's are public and vast. It is indeed hard to see how he could have retained his literary persona had he moved away from a narrow field of experience. The moments described in his stories are flat, sad, eerie, usually centred on some erotic sentiment through which the loneliness of the characters and the utter otherness of their world is made apparent. Klíma offers us the everyday life of Communism – bleak, stagnant, meaningless, with every gesture cut off from its fulfilment and hanging uncompleted in the air. No one can be trusted; no love or liking can find its cheerful outward expression. In unforgettable images, Klíma describes the backrooms, bars and rubbish dumps, the abandoned places where informer meets victim in a momentary embrace and where no one seems answerable to anyone.

The stories in the present collection are set in the decade of the Communist coup and the show trials. They are concerned with a young, shy, self-centred hero, as he searches for the needed sexual opportunity. All four of his first loves prove to be vacillating, treacherous, nymph-like. There is a wealth of subsidiary characters – bandmen and schoolmasters, doctors, firemen and trapeze artists, characters from the old Central European world of settled roles and proudly sported uniforms. But the poison of Communism has been breathed on all of them and as it steadily conquers them, the hero meanders through the debris, kicking it over in the hope of solace, and finding here and there a sudden, but illusory, moment of passion.

Even in the seediest of the episodes there is a kind of candour, an innocent openness to experience, which is the mark of a true narrator. Until recently Klíma has concentrated his talent on the writing of stories and novellas – forms suited to his delicate sense of irony. Now, however, after many years' work, he has produced a full-length, ambitious novel – *Soudeček z Milostí* ("A Judge on Trial") – which tells the story of a good judge, existing miraculously in the nightmare world of "socialist legality", in which he seeks a personal redemption. This, one of the saddest novels to have been written in contemporary Czechoslovakia, contains incomparable descriptions, not only of the extent of the moral corruption sanctioned and encouraged by Communism, but also of the quiet voice of true religion which Klíma and his contemporaries are increasingly disposed to hear. I hope that Chatto and Windus will soon issue a translation.

Translations of Czech and other European poetry by the late Václav Šverák are now available. The most substantial volume is a wide-ranging selection of poems by František Halas (1901–1949), with an introductory dialogue by the translator. Another volume includes translations from Goethe, Rilke, Verlaine, Rimbaud and Czech poets. They are available from A. H. Jackson, 31 Denford Road, Manchester M20 8TE at £8.50 the set. Cheques should be payable to Jackson. A. H. Šverák, Decensored, and all proceeds will go to the Arthritis and Rheumatism Council.



## Remainders

### Eric Korn

I've no false pride. Some people might think that getting a laugh out of Dr Lahmann's Establishment for the Application of Dietetic-Physical Remedies is like eating soft-shelled crabs, or catching male cuttlefish by pretending to be a female cuttlefish in distress; the easy option. Such people would scorn to extract cheap fun from the regulation. The advertising brochure for the doctor's cure tells us, "it is forbidden to converse about other patients' cases in a manner promotive of disquietude", "dissatisfied grumbling at the arrangements and management of the establishment cannot be tolerated". They would not turn up their noses at the risks and the chocolate-with-nutritive-salts, refuse to jeer at the insistence on open windows: the arbor wheel baths, the "gymnastical extension of the nerves". "Light need even the plants", remarks Dr Lahmann, thereby qualifying for the Browning ("Irk care the crop-full bird?") award for obfuscation. (The *New York Times* recently had the headline "New Iran Envoy: Rein on Shiites seen", which is similarly hard on the brain, but I digress.)

Dr Lahmann treats St Vitus's dance, scaly tetter, abdominal plethora, chronic chilliness of hands and feet, and all kinds of neurasthenia, "weakness of memory, insomnia or groundless apprehensions (misanthropy, *platzangst*)". He is the man who identified the particularly virulent form of agoraphobia known as *eisenbahnangst* or "railway-dread", the morbid fear that one will become (never mind about "one"; let me be frank, I will become) "so fearful and ill during the journey as to be obliged to leave the train at some intermediate station". This explains the pitiful wrecks we see washed up around Goodge Street or Caledonian Road. One fatal day, with briefcases aglow and hearts high, they set out for Victoria or King's Cross. Now they are objects of derision with their visceral palpitations and enhanced irritability of the gastric nerves. You can't go home again. You can't get there from here. Consider Phlebas who was once handsome and tall as you.

There are several reasons why Virago should republish *Relations and Complications* by H H the Dayang Muda of Sarawak. She lived through interesting times; she suffered; she tells her tale well; and she wields a mean erratum.

Her earliest memory is of comforting little Cyril and Vyvyan ("Uncle Oscar had been unhappy all day"). She was plain Gladys Palmer then, daughter of a simple biscuit millionaire, half of Huntley and Palmer. Her mother discovered Isadora Duncan; her father discovered a new biscuit for George Meredith's indigestion. Ruskin used to tell her to be like his little Rosalie and keep her petals so white that no one would dare to pick her; her father would often take her on sudden trips to Paris to nibble a newly invented bicky. It was a life of privilege. She married the younger son of the white Rajah of Sarawak, who treated her abominably. (The Brookes in general seemed to have behaved oddly to their wives. Whenever the Ranees arrived from England at the palace in Kuching, the Rajah would greet her perfunctorily and dash back to Berkshire for a bit of hunting. He never seems to have thought to bring foxhunting to Sarawak or head-hunting to the shires.) The young Rajah Muda was also an absentee but oppressive husband. He disapproved of the farm she ran successfully, and made her give up a prospering arts and crafts shop in the Burlington Arcade because Rajahs don't trade. When she gave up the farm and the shop, he got custody of her children; at which point she began to think about the politics of marriage. She went to Nice and took up with artists: Brancusi, McAlmon, Léon Daudet, Gertrude Stein came to dinner, Joyce sang for her. When we leave her, everything is going

swimmingly. But what I like about the Dayang Muda's book is its idiosyncratic errata slips, swinging like proud flags from the offending paragraphs. There are two; one corrects (the context is the Hon Sylvia Brett, "excellent at the drums") "four daughters" to "three daughters"; the other reads "for *Je m'en fous* read *Je m'en fiche*."

An observant person from St Hilda's has written to draw my attention to a remarkable miniature in the Irish National Gallery's Calendar for 1986. Opposite a portrait of the lady in question is this wonderfully resonant sentence: "Julia Kavanagh died suddenly in Nice after falling out of bed at the age of fifty-three."

She finds this funny (so do I) and tries to analyse the reasons for this, never a wise move. Why Nice, why fifty-three? Is the humour syntactic, she wonders, with its suggestion that Julia remained bedbound for fifty-three years, then began, miniature exemplar of humanity, her active life with a fatal fall. She wonders if fifty-three is funny because it is "too old to be tragic, too young to be a matter of course"; there's something radically humorous about threesomes, indeed cultural paranoids would argue that triadity is essential to wit; a notion that I might develop some other time (if desperate); but I think I side with the caterpillar—three inches is a very good height indeed. She also tells me that Julia K.'s life, as standard sources present it, offers much pleasing inconsequentiality to the student: "She was known for her biographies of Christian women of exemplary piety, but quarrelled with her father when he claimed her collaboration in one of his own works."

I am much taken by the possibility that the reason for the strange appeal of this Irish micro-life is not semantic or syntactic but prosodic.

Julia Kavanagh died suddenly in Nice after falling out of bed at the age of fifty-three.

Actually I'd like to have that again. Do you think we could manage blackletter? Oh well. It starts like one of those endless joke metres that the *New Statesman* Competition's page so enjoys: Alfred, Lord Tennyson liked to experiment with dactylic stanzas that went on and on; or, if you prefer, Christopher Robin goes hoppony hoppony etc. . . . They are not octopod but seven-and-a-half footed like an octopus that has just mated. (I'll come back to this point.) But the special thing about Julia is that she starts that way, suffers a couple of hiccups (no doubt engendered by falling out of bed) and then goes anapaestic. Moreover "in Nice"; if we wish to distinguish it from Innes or Ynys, has to be a spondee. Get rid of "died", by translation, and we have, as I hear it "Júliá/Kávanagh/óbúit/Súddényl/ In Nice/Áfter falling/out of bed/at the age/of fifty-three/".

The general name for these aberrations, I learn, is dactylic epirrhies, but this specific version consists of a dactylic tetrapod separated from its mirror image by an impassable spondee.

Perhaps I'd better explain about the octopus-mating reference. Before I do, please assume that I have hoisted (as Channel Four has begun to do, desperate for late-night custom) a small red triangle like a trysail in the left hand corner of the page to signify that some of this is going to require strong parental guidance.

First of all it is essential that you rid your mind of anthropomorphism. If you keep thinking of human parallels, we shall never get anywhere. Is that clear? Very well.

The sexually mature male octopus undergoes a curious metamorphosis of one of his eight tentacles (how should I know which one? does it matter which?) Zoologists call this a hectocotylized arm. He then swims in search of a receptive female. They court. At the height of the courtship the he-octopus produces a small packet of . . . pollen, which is wrapped in a membrane, the spermatophore. This he transfers to his specially adapted hand; which he then, I think I wish to say "incontinently", which he then incontinently thrusts into the mantle cavity of the female. He then leaves it, the arm I regret to say, there, while he jets off about his business. In the Argonaut, or Paper Nautilus, the aroused arm may swim freely for

some time, an image from nightmare.

What the female does with this unusual bio-token is neither here nor there. But the octopus is now seven-and-a-half footed and if it doesn't creep along the ocean floor going tumptily tumptily tumptily tumptily tumptily tumptily tumptily tump then he is missing a very clear cue. This rhythm has always needed a classical sounding name, and hectocotyly will do nicely.

No, not hectocutle. A cuttlefish is a kind of squid and has two long arms and eight short ones (or in the case of *Architeuthis gigas* eight long arms and two ridiculously long ones). I may have conflated the marital customs of squids and octopods in the account above, which will no doubt arouse the ire of rural puritans; certainly we need specimens of nine and ten footed verse:

Beneath the waves the mighty kraken sleeps  
asleep its ancient sleep, dreamlessly bubbling  
Deaf to the cries of the shrankitten herring and  
slaughtered anemones, long-suffering polyp  
remorselessly massacring . . .

I am sure you would prefer to fill in the verses yourselves.

It seemed appropriate, in the Siberian weather, to take the Russian wolfhound Bronze (the name is short for *Bromenasset Potemkin*) in Regent's Park, to visit the wolfpack that lives in a paddock beside the south gates of the Zoo, stationed there by the Society as a fine sample, or perhaps as sentries.

It was moving to see racial memory stirred by a canine madeleine (or dog-biscuit). The snow, the wind sighing through the heronry, the jingle of a passing tarantass, or what we took for a passing tarantass (actually it was Krishna-convoys, practising), the lupine moans. The wolves collaborated by standing about anxiously atop their artificial rock-tale for all the world like the Council in *The Jung Book* debating a tricky point of animal ethics. The dog responded. Tears of pure Tzarist nostalgia dripped unbidden along his endless muzzle. He shivered uneasily, with the awkward sense of not knowing the right instinctive response, like an amnesiac guest at a cocktail party. Eventually he produced an unfamiliar sound, a crunching, laryngeal growl like the word "where" spoken through closed lips. After a moment's hesitation we recognized it, the dog and I, as a familiar Russian obscenity, made our embarrassed excuses and left. And there are sceptics who doubt the story of Bridey Murphy!

My correspondent in Konstanz who will not tolerate the shrink-wrapped TLS has provoked some response. People have written from Ottawa and Ludwigshafen to point out that their local weather conditions frequently reduced the contents of the old package to cellulose-rich gruel. "If ever the TLS returns to the traditional and ecological roll, please also return to the traditional ecological way of delivering it to my doorstep by riding messengers," writes one. "Plastic wrapping significantly reduces the likelihood of having one's TLS read by postal employees in their coffee-breaks," writes the other, evidently no evangelist.

I of course am neutral. In trying to open roll-wrapped magazines I inevitably find that a Möbius-strip of newspaper adheres to the wrapper. In opening shrinkwraps, I get plastic caught between my teeth. I am equally against deforestation and polyvinyl pollution. Biodegradability is an admirable ideal, but one tries to postpone it as long as possible for one's loved ones.

A revised edition of *Graham Greene*, by A. DeVita, in *Twynne's English Authors Series*, has recently appeared (218pp. Boston, Twynne, £16.95; 0 8057 6911 0). First published in 1964, the book focuses on Greene's use of religious themes in his novels and also includes chapters on the short stories and his work for the theatre.

## Letters

### Wagner's Antisemitism

Sir, — To judge by Jacob Katz's discourteous reply (Letters, January 9) to this "condescending critic" of his book *The Darker Side of Genius*, he is obsessed by a conversation in Cosima Wagner's diaries which, he says, disproves "the widely canvassed belief that Wagner's antisemitism originated from his apprehension that he might be the son of his stepfather Geyer, who was held to be Jewish" — a belief that can be traced back to Nietzsche. The diaries were published complete in the mid-1970s. What Professor Katz doesn't say is that the conversation between Cosima and Richard he refers to was leaked word for word as long ago as 1933. Furthermore, Ernest Newman discussed it at length in the second volume of his Wagner biography and concluded, after comparing it with another source, that it was an extremely slippery piece of evidence indeed. I would have thought that any scrupulous scholar would at least need to mention Newman's doubts and his conclusion that "Cosima herself did not attach a vast amount of importance to the conversation" before using the same evidence again, particularly when such a crucial point is at stake. But no: Katz simply asserts that his "contention" that there is nothing to the rumour about Wagner's Jewish self-hatred "rests" on the "new insights" yielded by Cosima's report.

That it isn't quite as simple as this is shown by Roger Hollinrake's study of Nietzsche and the Wagner-Geyer issue in *Music and Letters* (1970). Having now at least taken the trouble to read the article, Katz declares airily "that it has been rendered completely obsolete by the information available to us from Cosima". But when Hollinrake published his findings the information had been available for years. Quite rightly, he made no use of it since he knew from Newman that it was virtually

useless in ferreting out the truth about Wagner's thoughts on Geyer and his alleged Jewish origin. By comparison with Katz, Hollinrake's piece is an intricate investigation of Nietzsche's role in the affair which not only offers a more subtle (and earlier) version of the conclusion that Nietzsche was mistaken in his surmise on the racial issue, but also admits the possibility that he was "probably more right than wrong in exposing a definite ambiguity in the artist's politically orientated public image" — an idea that at least goes some way towards explaining why Nietzsche's remarks about Wagner's origins have had such a powerful effect on public opinion, rather than naively trying to dismiss them, as Katz does, "once and for all".

If Katz thinks that my reference to Paul Lindau's critique of *Parsifal* is an "unbelievable misattribution", how does he account for this:

[*Parsifal*] could be seen as the musical fulfilment of that programme first put forward in one of Wagner's much discussed pamphlets — a programme which now counts as an aesthetic precursor of a movement that later gained currency in the social and public life of the whole of Germany. Perhaps the work could therefore be called "Christianity in Music" ["Das Christentum in der Musik"]?

Katz says that "there is not one single word" in Lindau's piece "that by any stretch of the imagination can be related to the theme at hand". Yet Lindau is obviously referring to the antisemitic programme in Wagner's brochure "Judaism in Music" ("Das Judentum in der Musik") as well as to the German antisemitic movement of the 1880s. Moreover, he makes the allusion even clearer by rechristening *Parsifal* in a way that inevitably recalls the title of Wagner's essay, thus expressing by association the mingling of antisemitism with Christianity (a prominent feature of Wagner's later view of the Jewish question) that he thought could be read into the music of *Parsifal* itself.

### FIFTY YEARS ON

The TLS of January 23, 1937, carried the following review by Arthur Clutton Brock of the first edition published in England of James Joyce's *Ulysses*. By this date parts of Finnegans Wake had appeared as "Work in Progress".

Mr Joyce's major work is at any rate obscure enough to have invited several interpretations, and its structure is sufficiently unlike that of the ordinary novel to have suggested hidden messages and meanings. It has, for example, been supposed to have a pattern analogous to that of the Odyssey, to give an accurate and realistic account of the "stream of consciousness" in the human mind, and by a new technique of writing to have expressed the nature of the characters' thoughts without the usual distortion of common sense and literary forms. But such explanations commonly arise when a new artistic method is invented; when the post-impressionists first startled the world with their pictures it was commonly believed that in some mysterious fashion they described essential as opposed to accidental properties of natural appearances. Later the artistic purpose of the new method emerges, and there is no longer any need to justify it either by supposing that it conceals as in a cryptogram an intelligible plan like that of previous and familiar works, or as a mode of scientific investigation.

There is, of course, a deliberate attempt to impose order on the incoherence of "Ulysses" by making all its events belong to a single day and by making the same episodes and characters appear and reappear in the kaleidoscope. But when one chapter contains a succession of masterly parodies of English prose in chronological order, from "Beowulf" to modern slang, when another is an amusing and satirical excursion on the Irish literary movement, another an irresistibly funny transcription of a young girl's day-dream in terms of the novelette, there has been reading, then the use of the same characters and episodes has the appearance of a merely conventional link between all the sections of the book. No doubt the link has a certain use in helping the reader along, but there is no reason to suppose that it makes the book a coherent whole from which no part can be removed without disaster. It is of no use to look for secret connexions, for in a work of art if the relations of the parts are not apparent enough to be felt, then the parts are

not artistically related.

Mr Joyce's unit, in fact, is not the book as a whole but the chapter, often the paragraph, and sometimes, one might almost say, the phrase, or even the word. "Ulysses" is evidently the production of a man fascinated by language rather than by thought or observation; the progress of his style towards the final word-making and word-taking of the unrecognisable "Work in Progress" has always been away from observation of life and towards the word as a complete substitute for the flesh. Like the lunatic whose speech degrades into a set of arbitrary sounds more and more remotely connected with his interior preoccupations, Mr Joyce has played with language — it is perhaps the last development of the Irishman's habit of inventing new languages which shall not be English — until it has become his private construction. This is not, because he is content, like the lunatic, with any private or delusory world; but it is a curious fact, which several writers have noticed, that there is a remarkable similarity between Mr Joyce's compositions and the prose style of certain lunatics. In the two instances the ordinary structure of the language is broken down for quite different reasons, but the results are oddly alike. And with the lunatic it may be worth while looking for the hidden connexion and meaning of apparently disorderly phrases; but with Mr Joyce we are not to analyse the latent content of his verbal constructions, we are only concerned with the artistic and therefore immediate effect of his language.

But "Ulysses" only marks a stage in this progress, and his release from the ordinary linguistic conventions only enables Mr Joyce to exercise all his talent, his almost incredible virtuosity, to the full. Passages that are genuine poetry alternate with the harshest and most deliberately contemptuous parodies, uproarious burlesque with subtle indications of character in a phrase. It is still a work of observation, and of observation sharpened by disgust; but it is above all the profusion and fertility of language that will fascinate the reader. In this, the first edition published in England, there is an appendix giving, among other details of controversy, the decisions of the United States District Court and of the United States Court of Appeals which allowed "Ulysses" to be published in that country.

This is only a small part of Lindau's critique, which is why I called it "tentative". But its appearance in a national German newspaper in 1982 is surely one sign that the line of reasoning which finds traces of Wagner's antisemitism in his art (and is capable of seeing Mime and Kundry as antisemitic stereotypes) cannot simply be "dated to the post-Hitlerite period", or regarded as a mere "residue of the appropriation of Wagner by the Nazis", as Katz claims in his book.

Finally, Mark Almond says that I and Katz both assume that Wagner's antisemitism "can only be properly assessed by reference to his influence on the Nazis" (Letters, January 16). I do not assume this, and neither does Katz, who in the rest of his book goes out of his way to separate the "facts" of Wagner's antisemitism from the Nazi question. But I am sceptical about Katz's blind faith in some of his sources; and I doubt the wisdom of his all too clean separation of history and aesthetics. What matters surely is Wagner's art and not his repellent antisemitism, unless we see a connection between the two and the critical relevance of this if we can. One thing I wanted to suggest in my review was that an author of a book about Wagner's antisemitism who refuses to explore this, either in the name of professional ethics or (after turning the tables on his own method) by reducing it to a matter of Nazi influence, is in danger of trivializing the whole issue.

JOHN DEATHRIDGE,  
King's College, Cambridge.

### Churton Collins

Sir, — It was appropriate that there should have been a comment on misprints in the next column to my letter (January 16). Tobias Smollett was writing in an age before public library spending cuts, and Edmund Gosse was less inventive than you suggest. The "half-starved house of literature" should, of course, have been that much-repeated "louse".

ANN THWAITE,  
The Mill House, Low Tharston, Norwich.

### Sergei Eisenstein

Sir, — To have found four minor errors in a full-length book hardly justifies Richard Taylor's complaint (Letters, November 21, 1986) of "fundamental and inexplicable mistakes" in my translation of Eisenstein's memoirs.

Mr Taylor's charge, made in his review and repeated in his letter, that I borrow freely "virtually without acknowledgement" from Soviet scholarship shows merely that he hasn't read the Acknowledgements on page 281 of my book. Here I state that Eisenstein's auto-

biography "appeared in the first volume of his *Selected Works* (*Izbrannyye proizvedeniya*) published sixteen years after his death" and record my debt to Samuel Sorgenstein for translating the "Chronology of Eisenstein's Life and Works" that derives from the same source (and for which Taylor accuses me of taking specific credit).

As for the alleged lack of "soundness" of my text as compared to Soviet scholarship, not a single example is given nor any explanation of "old scores" I have to settle, with whom or why. In his letter, Mr Taylor now admits that Soviet scholarship was given to "falsification of so much evidence in the past". My task has been to try and tell the truth.

HERBERT MARSHALL,  
Center for Soviet and East European Studies, Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, Illinois 62901.

### Salt-cellars

Sir, — Why should salt-cellars be regarded as a preserve of the female neck (Letters, January 16)? On hot summer days, when I was a little boy, my grandmother would constantly encourage me to "let the sun get at the salt-cellars".

D. H. THOMAS,  
343 Woodstock Road, Oxford.

Sir, — According to the *Petit Robert* dictionary, French *salière* in the anatomical sense goes back to 1611.

P. S. FALLA,  
63 Freeland Road, Bromley, Kent.

### Cambridge English

Sir, — Consider the casual vulgarity of this sentence in the review you published on January 16 by Edward Norman: "Beneath the casual vulgarity of his written style — he read history at Cambridge in the later 1960s — this Anglican Clergyman . . ."

It is casual because Edward Norman slips in a great package of allusion between two cheap parentheses. It is vulgar in the sloppiness of thought behind the apostrophe "sixties" (or, here, the mock-specific "later 1960s").

You are culpable, too. You connote a giant slur on me and all who passed? Could Cambridge history faculty in a year? I remember was 6. Perhaps Edward Norman really making some point about Prof Geoffrey Elton, Professor Eric Foner, other members of the faculty board in years in which case why did you allow childlessness into a review of books about S Africa?

DAVID WALKER,  
6 Midhurst Avenue, London N10.

### AMONG THIS WEEK'S CONTRIBUTORS

John W. Butt is a lecturer in Spanish at King's College, London. His books include *Writers and Politics in Modern Spain*, 1979. He is working on a new reference grammar of modern Spanish to be published this year. Judith Chermak's new novel, *My Name is Leah*, will be published later this year.

Martha Clark is the author of *Modern Italy, 1871-1982*, 1985.

Thomas Crawford's books include *Society and the Lyric*, 1980. He is editing the correspondence between Boswell and the Revd W. J. Temple.

W. B. Ewald is a Junior Research Fellow at The Queen's College, Oxford.

Dominic Fisher's poems appeared in *New Chatto Poets*, which was published last year.

Sean French is Deputy Editor of *New Society*.

Mark Goldie is a Fellow of Churchill College, Cambridge. His *The Tory Ideology: Politics, religion, and ideas in Restoration England* will be published shortly.

John A. C. Greppin is Professor of Linguistics at Cleveland State University and editor of the *Annual of Armenian Linguistics*.

Christopher Hitchens is Washington columnist of the *Nation*.

Eric Korn is an antiquarian bookseller in London.

Haifit Kureishi's script for the film *My Beautiful Laundrette* was published as a book last year.

John Nash is Reader in the History of Art at the University of Essex.

David Nokes is the author of *Jonathan Swift: A hypocrite reversed*, 1985.

John North is Professor of the History of Science at the University of Groningen, and author of *Horoscopes and History*, 1986.

Philip Oakes wrote for the army magazine, *Parade*, and was features editor of the forces daily, *Union Jack*, between 1946 and 1948.

Peter Porter's most recent collection of poems is *Fast Forward*, 1984.

David Robey is a lecturer in Italian at the University of Oxford. He is co-author of *Modern Literary Theory: A comparative introduction*, 1982, which will be published in a revised and expanded edition shortly.

Roger Scruton is Professor of Aesthetics at Birkbeck College, University of London.

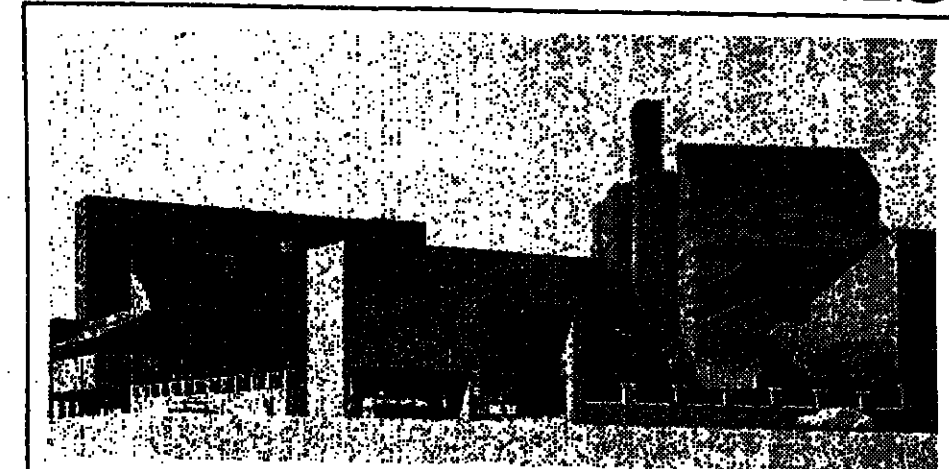
Robert Sheppard's most recent publications are *Returns: Texts 1980-84*, and *Turning the Prism: An interview with Roy Fisher*, which appeared last year.

Denis Mack Smith is a Senior Fellow of All Souls College, Oxford. A revised and updated edition of *A History of Sicily*, 1969, which he wrote jointly with the late Sir Moses Finley and Christopher Duggan, appeared last year.

Ralegh Trevelyan is the author of *Rome '44: The battle for the eternal city*, 1981.

David Underdown is Professor of History at Yale University, and Director of the Yale Center for Parliamentary History. His most recent book is *Revel, Riot, and Rebellion: Popular politics and culture in England, 1603-1660*, 1985.

## THE TIMES



## Books by the mile

But when? *The Times* tells the inside story of the new British Library (above), which will have 300 shelf-miles of books by the year 2020. It has been on the drawing board since 1962. The need for it is obvious, yet its opponents remain vociferous.



... and regularly in *The Times*, Bernard Levin (left) on the way we live now, Peter Ackroyd on books, Suzy Menkes on fashion, Kenneth Fleet on finance, Irving Wardle on the theatre, Frances Gibb on the law, Paul Griffiths on music, Shona Crawford Poole on travel, Clifford Longley on the Church, Philip Howard on words, David Robinson on the cinema . . . and much more each week

THE TIMES

The world's most famous newspaper (25p)



## COMMENTARY

## The lost boys

David Nokes

Blunt  
BBC 2

The territory of *Blunt* is already well trodden. Robin Chapman's screenplay springs no fifth-man surprises on us, nor attempts to break out from the well-documented cells of homosexuality and espionage. Where Alan Bennett's *An Englishman Abroad* used the subtle back-light of a brief theatrical anecdote to illuminate the after-life of treachery, Chapman makes a virtue of the conventionality of his motifs. From Burgess's drunken binges to the celebrated baked ham Melinda Mclenn had prepared for that last weekend in 1951, themes, characters and props all have the solid authority of a well-loved fable.

The seemingly inexhaustible fascination of this tale lies in a clash of social paradoxes: in the combination of elitist privilege with egalitarian idealism, in the blend of public-school prunks with a covert dedication to Marxism. The film opens with shots of Blunt (Ian Richardson) at Windsor Castle, flanked by footmen, accepting, with just the merest hint of condescension, a dinner invitation from the King. Only his lack of interest in cricket betrays something not quite English about him. From the royal apartments to the Foreign Office, from the Courtland Institute to rich buttermilk meadows by the Thames, the film panders to an instinct of rubber-necking snobbery as we watch Anthony and Guy saunter through the corridors and enclosures of power. To have had all this, and kissed it good-bye. It takes some explanation.

The film, however, is stronger on analogies than explanations. Incidental music from Berlioz's *The Damnation of Faust* represents one rather laboured attempt to elevate the accidents of history to the dignity of myth, though the impulses behind these treacheries seem as much quixotic as Faustian. Anthony Hopkins,

magnificently florid as Burgess, first appears wearing a Mephistophelian grin and a sailor's hat: "The train was packed with sea-scouts. Managed to get through three before Basingstoke. Talk about welcome home. Super-duper!" He gets Blunt to throw down the keys of the Courtland. "With these I can snaffle the cream of the collection", he gloats, in tones which suggest less a dedication to revolution than a spiffing tuck-shop debauch. The film works hard to develop a theme of friendship – or friendship as Michael Williams as Goronwy Rees prefers to call it – in the manner of *Another Country*. What emerges is a contrast of characters linked not by shared ideals but by a common stock of fourth-form slang. Blunt, equally fastidious whether eating his breakfast egg or scrutinizing a Renaissance cartoon, is precise to the point of prissiness. His *grande dame* manner, poise and intonation have the angular rectitude of self-conscious superiority. "Rather a sour-puss after lunch", comments Burgess, nicely catching the difference between them. Burgess himself is raffish after breakfast, randy after lunch and riotous after supper. "Thank you, matron", he puts at Rees's wife Margie (Rosie Keshlake) when re-proved for smutty talk in front of the children. Margie's is the alien voice in this counterfeited Arcadia, excluded by gender and ingenuousness from the schoolboy world of secret codes and loyalties. But her dramatic role is compromised by Chapman's use of her as an historical cipher; and her ignorance of both the Comintern and the Hitler-Stalin pact seems less like expression of simple values than a crude manoeuvre to smuggle in some background information.

Throughout the film the iconography of Poussin's "Arcadia" is used to express an irony of idealism. For Blunt it represents an image of rationality and order, yet the film, in its relish for sensuous detail, suggests an alternative explanation. The keys which Blunt throws down to his boisterous lover in the street do not open a world of rational optimism but close the gates of exile on a lost boys' paradise.



The newly cleaned statue of St Christopher from the facade of the fifteenth-century church of La Madonna dell'Orto, Venice. The photograph is one of the items in *The Saving of Venice*, an exhibition to commemorate the restoration of the city after the floods of 1967, at the Warwick Arts Trust, 33 Warwick Square, London SW1, until February 22.

## After the real thing

Duncan Wu

Shakespeare  
Twelfth Night  
Donmar Warehouse

Cheek By Jowl's exciting production of *Twelfth Night*, directed by Declan Donnellan, presents Sir Andrew Aguecheek (Aden Gillett) as a stelson-hatted, sex-crazed Texan who challenges Viola (Patricia Kerrigan) with a pistol and bull-whip; the Duke (Timothy Walker) commands a household of sailors, ordering a saxophone-playing chambermaid to "play on", while Olivia (Anne White) sits in her garden chair reading *Country Life*. Taking as its epigraph "Love is merely a madness" (from *As You Like It*), and drawing on a range of comic technique from slapstick to alternative comedy, the impression is one of steadily increasing insanity.

Though twisting the implications of the text, Cheek By Jowl largely evade gimmickry and create a frantic comedy of sexual errors. When the disguised Viola first meets Olivia, she is forced to guess which of three veiled figures is "the honourable lady of the house", Maria (Melinda McGraw), Olivia, or Feste (Stephen Simms). The speeches marked as Olivia's are divided between them, and Viola nearly accepts Feste as the real thing.

After this deception, the play's sexual ambiguities are compounded. Sebastian (David Morrissey) and Antonio (Patrick Rorer) are in love, Sir Andrew directs his lechery towards Feste, and the surprise union of the finale is that of Feste and Antonio. More crucially, Orsino's attraction to the "male" Viola is play-

ed as passionate love, and he constantly makes passes at "him". The disappointed tone of the Duke's functional speeches following the revelation of her true identity lends his closing description of her as "his fancy's quest" a wishful, twentieth-century resonance.

The production is most successful in its treatment of the sub-plot: Sir Toby, Sir Andrew, Maria and Feste are all played to the hilt. There is, after all, no Jacques to deflate them. Malvolio is a different kind of adversary to be for being unimaginative and sinister, and Hugh Ross plays him as a rule-worshipping civil servant whose threat to inform on Marin is stated with more than enough malice to justify his retribution. The most chilling moment of the evening comes in the final scene when, instead of vanishing into the night, he accepts Feste and Olivia's explanations, celebrates with the others, and delivers his promise of revenge as an aside to the audience. He represents a puritanism that is at best ridiculous, and at worst a threat – a view perhaps closer to Shakespeare's intention than the sympathetic Malvolio we have inherited from the Victorian age.

The major loss of this interpretation is that, in unannouncing the parts of Feste and Malvolio, the distinctive characteristics of both have been obscured to produce a pukeish engineer of mischief. Feste's wistful melancholy is as fundamental to the design of the play as Feste's foppishness, but neither quality is expressed. So although the composite Feste is a highly amusing misprising of the plot (dressing up as a mad German doctor, for instance, when he becomes Sir Topas), it is a shame that, despite their sensitivity to the spirit of the text, Cheek By Jowl never quite evoke the peculiar atmosphere of Illyria itself.

## AUTHOR, AUTHOR

Competition No 313

Readers are invited to identify the sources of the three quotations which follow and to send us the answers so that they reach this office no later than February 20. A prize of £20 is offered for the first correct set of answers opened on that date, or falling that the most nearly correct – in which case inspired guesswork will also be taken into consideration.

Entries, marked "Author, Author 313" on the envelope, should be addressed to the Editor, *The Times Literary Supplement*, Priory House, St John's Lane, London EC1M 4BX. The solution and results will appear on February 27.

1. To show the belated daughters of her daughter. To make the child a man, the man a child. To slay the tiger that don't live by slaughter. To tame the unicorn and lion wild. To mock the subtle. In themselves begot'd. And cheer the ploughman with incessant crops. And waste huge stones with little water-drops.

2. Of would you know why Henry sleeps. And why his mourning Mother weeps.

And why his weeping Mother mourns? He was unkind to unicorns.

3. They noticed that virginity was needed To trap the unicorn in every case. But not that, of those virgins who succeeded. A high percentage had an ugly face.

The answers to Competition No 309 will appear next week.

On December 18 1986, the Carl H. Pforzheimer Library on East 42nd Street moved and changed its status. The Carl H. Pforzheimer Library and His Circle Collection is now the newest of the Special Collections of the New York Public Library, located in Room 319 of the Research Division, Fifth Avenue at 42nd Street, New York, NY 10018. After a period in which the collection will be newly arranged, it will be open to readers under the same terms and conditions as the other special collections at New York Public Library.

## Gothic glimmerings

David Robey

The Name of the Rose  
Cannon Cinema, Haymarket

Before making the *The Name of the Rose* Jean-Jacques Annaud had at least two witty and original pictures to his credit: *Black and White in Colour*, a satire of colonial life in Africa, and *In Quest of Fire*, an imaginative account of the adventures of a prehistoric tribe. As one could expect, therefore, his film is something other than a faithful translation of Umberto Eco's novel. In fact, rather archly, the credits describe it as a palimpsest. Presumably (the metaphor sounds like Eco's invention) this means not a pre-text beneath the printed version, but something written on top, because it is hard to see the film as anything but a simplified and to some degree trivialized revision of the original.

Of course the original had to be simplified. The film legitimately leaves out the reflections on semiotics and epistemology to which Eco's William of Baskerville is given, and most of the long discussions on other cultural topics. To be fair, also, it gives due relief to the book's central contrast between oppression and tolerance. Sean Connery may not be many readers' idea of William, but with his air of amiable, pragmatic, world-weary rationality he stands out clearly against the opposed fanaticisms of the Franciscans and the Papal representatives. William's crucial debate with Jorge of Burgos about the value of laughter is faithfully and powerfully re-enacted.

At the same time, the film takes liberties with the plot that reduce it to banality. The novice Adso's incidental sexual encounter with the village girl becomes much more central, and is altered to produce a romantic, half-happy

ending. William's clash with the Inquisitor, Bernardo Gui, becomes more melodramatic, largely through the prominence given to the conventional paraphernalia of torture instruments and burnings at the stake. The Inquisitor himself, played with appropriately menacing energy by F. Murray Abraham, is made to meet his just deserts and dies in a peasants' revolt, anachronistically impaled, like Kirk Douglas in *The List of Adrian Messenger*, on a mechanical hay tedder.

But the major loss is Eco's vision of the Middle Ages. While Annaud brings out clearly enough the aspects of oppression and obscurantism, he ignores completely the novel's nostalgic admiration of the order, stability and serenity of the world in which it is set. The fact that the novel is also about the end of this world does not make the feeling any less strong. Yet the film effaces it with a grotesque, gothic image of the fourteenth century. Gloom, squalor and gore are far more prominent than the limpid architecture of Eco's abbey. The brilliant intricacy of the labyrinth is obscured by the film's sinister Piranesian appearance. Most obtrusively, the monks are given a rogues' gallery of outlandish faces, particularly the heretic Salvatore, played by Ron Perlman with some of the mannerisms he employed as a caveman in *In Quest of Fire*.

No doubt, admirers of the novel should make the effort, considerable though it is, to see Annaud's film as an independent text. From that point of view it still shows some of the style and originality of his earlier work, and is quite compelling to watch. However unfaithful, the acting is fast and interesting; Michael Lonsdale is good as the Abbot, Feodor Chaliapin as Jorge, and the Chilean actress Valentina Vargas as the village wench. And for all the gloom of the abbey (the exterior was purpose-built at Cinecittà) the mountain setting is splendid.

## Master class

John W. Butt

A Love Bewitched  
Curzon Cinema

Fantasy is not the strong point of the modern Spanish arts, and, even more than a decade after the death of Franco, authors, producers and directors habitually insure against the dreaded charge of romantic escapism by including some concession to realism or some complaint about contemporary problems. For example, the marvellous *Carmen* of Carlos Saura and Antonio Gades was not set in some moonlit Seville but in a Madrid academy of dance, and was based on the artistic and emotional problems bedevilling rehearsals for the ballet of the same name. This version of Falla's *El amor brujo*, by the same director, choreographer and dancers, is set in a gypsy encampment on a stylized rubbish tip near some urban sprawl, and thus includes a comment, neither clear nor particularly relevant, about conditions in the shanty towns. In fact this humdrum setting is a surprise, since the film starts by brilliantly advertising the cinematographer's ability to swap reality for illusion. But the promised visual feast is never served; the camera swings away from a dismal urban reality, shows us the lights, props and backcloths which can make a magic world, and then brings us anticlimactically back to another dismal urban reality. Whereupon Saura simply abdicates: the direction and camera work are totally self-effacing and the making of the film is left entirely to the dancers, Gades, Cristina Hoyos and the sultry Laura del Sol as the young, enticing and unsuitable temptress who as usual serves as a foil to the better dancing of the older Hoyos.

This film comes close on the tail of *Carmen* and does not break much new ground. In some ways it runs up hard against the limitations of Andalusian dance and music, which for all their fiery passion have a narrow repertoire of gestures and moods and are anything but elegant. The story, of a widow who must exorcize the ghost of her dead husband so that she can love again, might seem to call either for "effects" or

of which this film, and Spanish film in general, is contemptuous – or for a certain amount of psychological speculation and symbolism. In fact the story is an irrelevance, and the throw-away dialogue is so much empty space between the dancing. The result is not so much a film as a stage performance of a dozen or so fine dance sequences during which the cameras might as well have been bolted to the floor somewhere in the fifth row.

One result of such rigid angling is an intensely close focus on some by now very familiar faces – in fact as much on the faces as on the more interesting moving bodies. The pained, electrified expressions, the arched, menacing poses, the rippling hands and wary challenges and facing-down, the sudden chords and wails of *dolor, pena, sufrimiento*, are thrilling as always, but they are also stylized and predictable. In fact one notices the modifications: even though the *tacones* is suppressed in many of the sequences, you feel that the dancers are longing to stamp. As for love, in both *Blood Wedding* and *Carmen*, it is a malignant erotic curse, a hateful affliction that this tradition of dance, with its angry lust, expresses perfectly. But the same tradition hardly suits a grieving middle-aged widow, whom we see dancing with the ghost of her husband with all the tender sadness of a mongoose circling a cobra.

One feature of Gades's films is the sense of a tradition threatened: none of them, including this one, suggests that he has much hope for anyone in his company except himself and Cristina Hoyos, and in *A Love Bewitched* we again see Laura del Sol cast as the fairly promising girl receiving patient lessons from the old hand. The effect is rather like a glamorous Master Class, and one can only wonder what will happen to the company when Gades and Hoyos retire. Will it collapse, or will it achieve some artistic mutation which will produce a renewed, more flexible version of a magnificent but rather time-worn Spanish tradition?

Peter Barkworth's one-man show, *Stiegfried Sassoon*, a compilation of the life and works of the poet, which was reviewed in last week's *TLS*, will transfer to the Apollo Theatre for a four-week season on February 6.

## South of the border

Christopher Hitchens

Salvador  
Various cinemas

Name a country "The Saviour" and all you get, it seems, is a succession of calvaries. This is the first American film (apart from the Oscar-winning "short" on the work of Dr Charles Clements) to make the wretched country and its people into a subject rather than an object. It could hardly offer a bolder contrast to the current spate of unrepentant militarism which is vying for success at box-offices across the United States.

The opening, for all that, gives a false promise of the genre of Michael Herr and Sean Flynn; "journos" protagonists who have coarsened, and been coarsened, by the depiction of every little war from Chad to Beirut. We have met them before (unredeemed by an unsavory sentimentality) in *Under Fire* and for the first half-hour of *Salvador* it looks as if we are stuck with them again. Photo-journo Richard Boyle (James Woods) has run out of credit and has drunk his wife, if not himself, out of house and home. Desperate for an assignment and a high, he teams up with a man who owes him money (James Belushi, upholding the family honour as the failed disc-jockey Dr Rock) and flees south of the border. The time is the critical one, some half-dozen years ago, when the United States was moving from a guilty emphasis on human rights to a less apologetic interventionism.

Boyle regales Rock with crass promises of a land where, to put it no lower, the drugs and the pussy are cheap. But he turns out to be concealing a love of the place, half-expressed in a love for one of its women. He also turns out to have a more than superficial understanding of its travail. The central sixty minutes of Oliver North's film are in fact almost a drama-documentary. The speeches and asides of the liberal American ambassador, of the leader of the death squads and of the impassioned Archbishop are all based upon, and in some cases taken from, direct reported speech. Several incidents are reconstructions and several others – like the visit to the "killing field" of the death squads at El Playon – could

## On the road

Sean French

Rosinante  
Renoir cinema

*Rosinante*, the first feature film of Ann and Eduardo Guedes, is like the Pompidou Centre – all the machinery is on the outside in full view. The question is, is there a building underneath? Starting from the title, which refers to Don Quixote's steed, the film is packed with themes, symbols and literary references which aren't, however, just commentaries on the film's subject – they constitute it.

The film's makers have attempted an almost impossible task. The plot is a familiar modern version of the picaresque that has formed the basis for a number of road movies both in Europe and the United States. Bill, played by John Hurt, leaves the city for the countryside on a quest that is barely articulated, let alone achieved. Mysteries are touched on but not explained and the film ends abruptly and inconclusively. Much the same could be said of two of the major films of the 1970s, Monte Hellman's *Two-Lane Blacktop* and Wim Wenders's *Im Lauf der Zeit* (known in Britain as *Kings of the Road*). But those films – like *The Pickwick Papers* and, for that matter, *Don Quixote* itself – were grounded in a vividly particular sense of place, of what life is like on the road.

*Rosinante* is deliberately presented as a fantasy. It begins in a symbolic, decaying old cinema. Bill laments that he likes a good story, Bill counters by saying that plots and characters don't matter – what one remembers are landscapes and perhaps the odd face. He decides to leave the city in search of the countryside and

as well have been. The reporter-heroes do not cease to behave like Hunter S. Thompson, but their context begins to look as if scripted by Joan Didion.

The film has the same virtues and drawbacks as her *Salvador*. It registers all the insane ugliness of the situation, most especially as it affects the people. It has a very acute ear for the special rhythms of American political euphemism, uttered by a marvellously well-cast duo of hard/soft "advisers". But it is also in thrall to certain conventions which might be described as "bleeding heart". Two set-pieces, in particular, ought to be cut straight out. The first of these is the moment when Boyle tells the "advisers" what he thinks of them. In order to do this, he sheds the gross and very fluent vernacular that he employs the rest of the time, and becomes sententious and verbose. The second occurs when the guerrillas, who are otherwise portrayed rather kindly, take the decision to shoot some prisoners. Boyle, in the heat of battle, delivers a speech of the "you're becoming like them!" school. In neither case is it believable, either that a half-zonked American cynic would speak in that fashion, or that his intended audience would pay heed and even argue back. Both sequences seem to be insurance against accusations of partiality.

The intense, localized reality of war and repression is what gives the film its character. This could, I think, have been made more of by a serious policy on the characters should speak Spanish. Archbishop Oscar Romero is murdered during Mass, having just given a bitter sermon about *los derechos humanos*. His murder is instigated at a conspiratorial meeting where fascist platitudes, this time spoken in English, made the audience giggle rather than gasp. In both cases the words spoken are the authentic ones but the failure of effect, in the age of the subtitle, is one which Costa-Gavras, for example, would not have allowed.

*Salvador* is a good film which could easily have been a very good one. If it does no more than register the ambiguities of the American presence, it at least tries to do so. James Woods, and Elepadia Carrillo as his ill-used but patient girlfriend, make as sound a metaphor of North-South love-hate as could plausibly have been attempted for general release.

reality, though he comments, not with striking originality, that "reality seems more of an invention by the hour these days".

The places he visits reveal England as a corrupted ruin: a decaying stately home around which voracious tourists prowl, the ruined cottage purchased by an urban couple, a cave. Bill is accompanied not by a horse or servant but by "the jester" (Ian Dury, the rock star turned actor) who magically appears at intervals to declaim pastoral passages from English literature. "A green thought in a green shade", he says staring out of the window of a mansion and, citing *Emma*, "English verdure, English culture, English comfort".

Bill's sentimental literary perception of England is stressed. During his travels he meets a woman called Jess. "You need an Ordnance Survey Map", she says to him. "I prefer Wordsworth's *Guide to the Lakes*", responds Bill. (A typical example of the Guedes's way with a phrase.) Jess is driving across the country with a van load of computer equipment. This she is using to infiltrate the computer of the National Coal Board. In the light of political realities, Bill is forced to see that his pastoral vision of England is an illusion. The film ends.

The Guedeses have made a small perception about sentimental Englishness but in the film it becomes no more than that. Its view of pastoral is partial, and its presentation of political activism ludicrous. The clumsy and pretentious narrative gives the performers little opportunity and the result is for the most part simply dull.

A public appeal to raise over £1 million to enable the Tate Gallery to buy John Constable's painting "The Opening of Waterloo Bridge", which was exhibited in 1832, will be launched on January 27.



# Levelling the Levellers

Mark Goldie

J.C.D. CLARK  
*Revolution and Rebellion: State and Society in England in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries*  
196pp. Cambridge University Press. £20 (paperback, £6.95).  
0521 33063 7

This book is about not history but historians; it is an attack on the "bankruptcy" and "emptiness" of liberal and socialist histories. Those who have studied early modern English history are said by J. C. D. Clark to belong to three camps. There is Old Hat, those Whig-liberals who arranged history into a benign unfolding of constitutional virtues. There is Old Guard, the clapped-out Marxist brigade who grew up in the 1930s, and who have foisted structural, economic and "materialist-reductionist" analyses upon history. Then there is the Class of '68, the soggy romantics nostalgic for the "radical" euphoria of the late 1960s, who are fond of something called "popular politics", and moral crows.

It turns out that not much is said about Old Hat, except that it is interestingly persistent in America, and pronouncedly so in J. H. Hexter. Class of '68 (historians like John Brewer and Roy Porter) are too risible to merit much attention either. The real enemies are the "vapid" "nostalgists" of the Old Guard, and the most constant targets Christopher Hill and Lawrence Stone, the latter's *Causes of the English Revolution* (1972) being the heroic last stand of structural explanations of the English "Revolution", although Clark's choicest venom is reserved for E. P. Thompson. Historical materialism is not, we learn, the real root of Old Guard interpretations, but rather their "character-twisting hatred of orthodox religion", which probably has to do with their experience "at English public schools in the 1920s and 30s". This is a choice way of reducing reductions.

"Fashionable" and "unfashionable" are among Clark's favourite words. Interpretations are held to be "quaint" or "outdated fixations". And he likes to begin sentences with "Even in the 1980s . . .", when commenting upon some frightful solecism of Hill's, for he thinks nobody should be seen dead wearing such opinions in the 80s. It is clear, then, that for Clark "the historian's own historical location must be diagnosed". He therefore owes it to us to locate himself, but this he has failed to do. Perhaps we should fill the lacuna. In recent years a new historiographical fashion has begun to consolidate, which we can call Young Fogey. It feeds upon the ideology of the New Right and has two strands: one is libertarian, admiring Hayek and Friedman, but distastefully American; another is Oakesbotian, and chiefly found in Cambridge. Both think the bureaucratic centralist state is bankrupt, but the second strand thinks that Liberalism is evil. In the latter mood, Clark reverences Cardinal Newman, whose eighteen Theses on Liberalism he prints in Appendix A. He also quotes Chateaubriand with approval and speaks of "the vast inertia of immemorial forms of social life", before the age of Liberalism and its bastard progeny, "Attlee-esque social engineering".

Clark pursues the historiographical implications of the New Right with an acolyte's fervour. One outcome is an insistence that the state has never been much good at purposefully changing things in the past; that all the important things changed more slowly than we imagined, or if suddenly, only accidentally. "Revolutions" are simply not to be found, the word is redundant; though there were, true, some rebellions, such as the "petulant outbreaks" of 1642 and 1688. This historiography goes in for pulling rabbits out of hats. Momentous things like the emergence, or demise, of party systems turn out to be the result of unimaginably complex high-political manoeuvres occurring in very short spaces of time among very few but very important people. It is a celebration of contingency, of "chance, ignorance and error", a bathetic teasing of the teleologists.

A whole series of nostrums are also embodied, which are now absolutely de rigueur in the profession, and found among all sorts of his-

torians not themselves Young Fogeys. Chief among them is the idea that in all of the past four centuries the monarchy, the aristocracy and the Church turn out to be far more important than we previously thought. One consequence in Clark is his insistence on the virtues of the English *ancien régime* (for that is what it is now to be called), before Liberalism struck its tragic blow in Catholic "Emancipation" (the inverted commas are mandatory). The system of patronage and clientele that characterized the *ancien régime* turns out to have been rather effective and unobjectionable and the "radicals" of the Civil War to have been insignificant, perhaps not even existent. The Levellers are out, and the Jacobites are in. (Appendix B surveys the recent scholarship on Jacobitism.) The franchise is "a rather peripheral question" and talk of the "unreformed Commons" or "Old Corruption" betrays the atomistic and bureaucratic ideologies of Liberalism, inappropriate in examining an organic and hierarchical past. People in the past, Clark tells us, cared chiefly about which king, and the modern preoccupation with "cotton factories in Manchester or the delineation of drains in Birmingham" is tiresomely misguided.

Clark thinks his new methodological injunctions have come from *within* scholarly history. The Class of '68 whored after auxiliary sluts like sociology and anthropology but the 70s and 80s have seen the "rediscovery of scholarly standards from *within* history" – although his born-again history will need the hitherto ignored and angelic auxiliary science of theology. But Clark's claims are hardly the preserve of history, nor of his particular brand of it. He calls on us to listen to what agents in the past thought they were doing, the hermeneutical injunction. Yet that has been the insight of a dozen disciplines for some considerable time; a vast international army will deplore with him "the Lockian, secular, empiricist mental universe". But Clark, who complains of narrow specialization, doesn't like to look beyond history. Again, it is laudable "to restore the autonomy to past individuals", but why not to Martin Guerre as well as the Duke of Newcastle?

Another injunction is that the contingencies of past politics were important, and too easily ignored by social(ist) historians. Clark has not noticed the widespread revival of the conjunctural in social theory and social history. Nor is he alone in complaining of premature secularization in studying the past. But when he comes to do more work on Christian theology, he will find that it did not only take the form of an Augustinian quietus, a univocal Anglicanism; Christianity has also produced the grandest of teleologies, the most activist of eschatologies. It won't do to say that the sceptical, the secular, the liberal, are rabbits out of an 1830s hat; their ancestry is theological.

The trouble with historiographical essays is that they quickly beg philosophical questions. Clark's book is flawed in failing to decide whether he prefers a positivist or Idealist stance. His nominalism eats away at his urge to find a theological vision. He teeters between defending what is sometimes called "the new British school of young antiquarian empiricists" and an insistence that all that is on offer are competing and circumscribed visions. He gropes at the problem when he talks of reconciling "an idealist methodology and the narrative mode".

Often his claim is that this or that "teleology" has been found wanting in the archives. Some readers will be more likely to be upset by his dissolution of faith in the progress of knowledge. The injured scholar will plead she went naked into the archive; but Clark will reply that Clio is always clothed. If this is true, then the practice of history may have more to do with dogmatics than with evidence. Clark's references to Newman and Chateaubriand suggest this is so, but in that case, his mentor, Maurice Cowling, is better at it, and more self-knowing about it. In Clark, it just isn't clear whether the High Anglican and Jacobite stand is meant to be a matter of conviction, evidence, or irony. If the last, then we may enjoy this witty Voyage to Laputa, in which our new Gulliver shows us the flying island of corrupt historical "projectors" crumbling as it collides with the spirit and pillars of true-blue Balnibarbi. But if it is meant to be a matter of conviction, then Clio has been carried off to the cave of Adulman.

# Meeting the locals

David Underdown

ANTHONY FLETCHER  
*Reform in the Provinces: The government of Stuart England*  
396pp. Yale University Press. £22.  
0300 03673 6  
CHRISTOPHER HILL  
*Collected Essays*  
Volume Three: People and Ideas in 17th century England  
340pp. Brighton: Harvester. £28.50.  
07108 0512 8  
COLIN JONES, MALYN NEWITT and STEPHEN ROBERTS (Editors)  
*Politics and People in Revolutionary England*  
319pp. Oxford: Blackwell. £27.50.  
0631 14613 X

Public buildings reveal much about the societies which produce them. Most of our often dreary county halls date from more recent times, but, as Anthony Fletcher reminds us, there remain a few impressive survivals – at Northampton, Abingdon and other places – from the later Stuart and early Georgian periods. The classical grandeur of the new sessions halls, which often replaced cramped accommodation in draughty market-houses, proclaimed the confident authority of a landed governing class, and the secure identity of the counties they ruled. *Reform in the Provinces* shows in great detail how these county oligarchies triumphed over the spasmodic efforts of both Crown and Parliament to control them.

Drawing on the private papers of numerous JPs as well as the public records of Quarter Sessions and parishes – and with a few collections kept by local officials like the Lancashire constable Ambrose Barcroft to supplement them – Fletcher offers a rich fund of information on almost every aspect of Stuart local government. He reviews the selection and general character of the Commissions of the Peace, and the attempts to direct them by Council orders and the charges given by justices of assize. He shows the increasing complexity of seventeenth-century administration, which led to a steady devolution of business from Quarter to Petty Sessions, and amply illustrates the enforcement of both law and policy by the JPs.

Fletcher's book raises some crucial questions about the relationship between the centre and the localities in Stuart England. The notion, fashionable a few years ago, that in this period few people had political horizons broader than their own county, has run into a good deal of criticism. Fletcher is judiciously balanced on the matter. He notes the intrusion of national politics as the country became more divided: opposition to the militia in East Anglia in the 1620s (a "mixture of localist sentiments and sense of constitutional principles"), recurrent purges of county benches during the Interregnum, tensions between Whig and Tory justices at the end of the century. But localism is a constantly recurring theme: counties differed greatly in their administrative structures and in the energy with which they implemented particular policies.

Seventeenth-century England has always been a lively arena for historical controversy, and that it continues to be so is clear in the other two books under review: yet another volume of essays from the fertile pen of Christopher Hill, and the collection *Politics and People* honouring Professor Ivan Roots on his retirement from Exeter University. In a notable essay, "Parliament and People", Hill claims that the "county community" orthodoxy has already disintegrated, though he accepts that much valuable work is still being done from the localist perspective – a statement confirmed by Stephen Roberts's fine exploration of "Godliness and Government in Glamorgan", and by other contributions by Fletcher and Jim Sharpe, in *Politics and People*.

The localist approach does not necessarily involve playing down the English Revolution of 1640-60, but in recent years plenty of historians have done that. The "revisionist" argument is by now pretty familiar: early Stuart conflict was largely an "extension of court faction" with little ideological content, unrelated to any deeper divisions in society, and having nothing to do with the subsequent march into

civil war. Fletcher's survey of county government could be used to support both the revisionist position and that of its critics. But his evidence of gentry restiveness in the face of inconsistently applied Stuart policies, and (in his splendid chapter on the militia) of more widespread opposition, at least in East Anglia, clearly suggests that by the 1620s consensus politics were fast eroding. He also argues, with appropriate reservations, that the revolution was indeed a major watershed. There were, to be sure, many continuities after 1660: the Essex JPs, for example, were still busily regulating personal behaviour, confirmation that the "reformation of manners" was not the exclusive preoccupation of earlier puritan magistrates and parish notables. Yet the whole thrust of his argument is that whereas before 1640 there were serious localist concerns about the intentions of central government, after 1660 the gentry's control was only briefly challenged in the extraordinary circumstances of James II's reign.

The revisionist debate surfaces more explicitly in the other two collections. In *Politics and People*, Barry Coward tries to give a balanced answer to the question, "Was there an English Revolution?" but comes down mainly on the revisionist side. Peter Gaunt suggests that the 1654 Parliament was a fairly traditional one, more concerned with legislation (though it completed none) and less with confrontation than used to be supposed. Austin Woolrych, however, in a succinct account of the General Council of the Army, rejects attempts to write off the Levellers; and Sharpe, reviewing Essex petitions against "scandalous" and Laudian clergy, pointedly advises scholars who think that hostility to Arminianism had nothing to do with the civil war to "spend a few days working through local government records". Hill meets the revisionists head on, though with characteristic generosity he admits that he has learnt something from them. One of the pieces reprinted in his collection, on Oliver Cromwell, dates from 1958; others deal with subjects as various as Karl Marx, piracies, and the Lake correspondence from Henry VIII's reign. But in many of the recent essays he makes a powerful case that revisionist history, by concentrating only on government and high politics, misses the social and cultural conflict that was central to the seventeenth century. Even those who may find it hard to swallow every detail of his once more restated case for 1640-60 as a bourgeois revolution will find his general approach refreshing.

Some of the most interesting work on this period during the past few decades has come from social historians, and the results are at last beginning to filter into political history. Several essays in *Politics and People* reflect this, including the ones by Roberts and Sharpe already mentioned. Robert Ashton's analysis of the work of the Indemnity Committee in 1647-8 is not strictly social history, but it usefully illustrates the impact of civil war on the lives of common soldiers and civilians. Fletcher, too, shows an impressive mastery of social history: on poverty, vagrancy, and village social relations in general. Government, he rightly notes, did not function only from the top down: "government by participation" involved many people of middling status, a fact that justifies the attention he gives to jurors and constables. His book provides striking amplification of the distinction in one of Hill's essays between the poor and "the people" – the properties, in other words. A large part of seventeenth-century local government can be reduced to the control of the working, recreational and sexual habits of the poor.

Fletcher ends on a somewhat Whiggish note. "The legacy of the Stuart period", he tells us, was "a strong and enduringly stable administrative system" that made possible "the development of the modern English state without catastrophic political disruption or social upheaval". The builders of those Stuart sessions halls would have approved, happy, as one of them put it, to have escaped "the tyranny of a French army, or the madness of a lawless rabble". Not everyone would view the achievements of the century so optimistically. Still, Fletcher, Hill, and many of the contributors to *Politics and People* do well to remind us that the best historical writing takes account of both the governed and the governed.

# Stripping the metropolitan assets

Judith Chernaik

CAROL KENNEDY  
*Mayfair: A social history*  
300pp. Hutchinson. £12.95.  
009 155590 6  
STEVE HUMPHRIES and JOHN TAYLOR  
*The Making of Modern London, 1945-1985*  
172pp. Sidgwick and Jackson. £9.95.  
0263 99369 3  
MICHAEL ELLIOTT  
*Heartbeat London: The anatomy of a supercity*  
206pp. Firethorn Press. £5.95.  
09475252 5  
SHIRLEY GREEN  
*Who Owns London?*  
224pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £10.95.  
0297 78962 7  
NICHOLAS SHAKESPEARE  
*Londoners*  
229pp. Sidgwick and Jackson. £12.95.  
0263 99173 9  
JOHN CANNING (Editor)  
*The Illustrated Mayhew's London*  
264pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £14.95.  
0297 78957 0  
IAN HESSENBERG (Editor)  
*London In Detail*  
Unnumbered pages. John Murray. Paperback, £9.95.  
07195 4339 8

For anyone who cherishes London's history and wishes to see the city's unique virtues preserved, these books make depressing reading. The stories they tell overlap and confirm a general impression of precipitous decline in the human resources and values of the city, although financial activity in certain sectors appears to be booming. London has always had its visionaries and dreamers, including Sir Christopher Wren, Blake and Dickens. But these books suggest strongly that the visionary energy in London in the 1980s is focused exclusively on making money – not to generate jobs, not to rebuild the schools, housing, hospitals, the arts, on which the welfare of the population depends, but simply for its own sake. The cumulative portrait is of a society engaged in

conspicuous mindless asset-stripping.

How can a subject as complex as London, or even one aspect of London, like the history of Mayfair, be tackled in 300 pages? A favourite journalistic technique is the interview: talk to the people who were there, who remember life as it was fifty years ago. When the reminiscences come not from Mayfair hostesses but from Thames lightermen, assembly-line workers at Ford's Dagenham plant, typists and traffic wardens, they are called "Oral History". For the London Weekend Television series on *The Making of Modern London*, hundreds of Londoners were interviewed, and a picture of the post-war years pieced together. Passages from these interviews interlard a chronicle in which utopian socialist planning and capitalist greed conspire to prevent the vast majority of Londoners from having any say in the matters which affect them most directly: housing, employment, education, public services. Each section of this chronicle (one of four books made from the full LWT series) is worth study; in particular, the accounts of the death of dockland, and of Commonwealth immigration to London in the 1950s and early 1960s, and attendant problems of assimilation and racial conflict. Unfortunately, material which must have been vivid on the television screen is flat on the page; the narrative is told in prose of a relentless simple-mindedness, illustrated by dispiriting photographs of council housing, kitchens and office interiors. A great city deserves better prose, as does the epic story of its confident expansion after the war and its subsequent decline, with the displacement of urban communities into soulless "New Towns" and tower blocks, the closure of the Port of London, and the dispersion of commerce and industry.

Much of the historical material in *The Making of Modern London* is corroborated by Michael Elliott, a journalist for *The Economist*, in *Heartbeat London*, his "anatomy" of the city's economic structure. He too chronicles the death of dockland, the decline of manufacturing industry in the 1960s and 70s, the loss of jobs in retailing and office work, the continuing housing crisis, the dramatic increase in unemployment among the young, and espe-

cially young blacks. But he sets against this chronicle of decline the expansion of financial services in the City, new developments in dockland and along the M25, tourism, the black economy, and the prospect of bigger and better leisure centres. His cautious optimism about London's future, which he locates in a "unique cultural mix" of the old and the new, specifically in the "street-cred" economy of media people, fashion, punk-rock and advertising, is not only unconvincing but somehow extremely unappealing, especially when he recommends that this entrepreneurial energy should be applied to "finance, software, the law, education – all businesses whose product will be instantly tradeable abroad by telephone or satellite within a decade". If the prosperity of London depends on selling education and the law – and why not throw in the arts and sciences? – to the highest bidder on the open market, then we may well be entering a new age of barbarism.

Who owns London? Details of ownership of all buildings that have changed hands since 1879 are listed in HM Land Registry – to which the public does not have access. Shirley Green thus presents her extraordinary compilation of statistics as an exercise in detective work, tackling in turn the holdings of the Crown, the Church, the titled families, the charities, the City, the ancient village companies, local authorities – and, most interestingly, the property companies, the insurance companies, and the pension funds. The book does not make easy reading: the facts and especially the figures are bewildering and indigestible, and staggering in their implications, especially if one believes in public ownership of public resources, and in accountability of ownership. Traditions of social responsibility associated with some of the great land-owning families, like the Grosvenors, play no part whatever in the dealings of the property speculators who now control London's development. The major shifts in ownership have taken place since the war, and Green's account of the building up of the giant property portfolios, the fortunes made (and in some cases lost), is confirmed by cross-reference to both *Heartbeat London* and *The Making of Modern London*. Architectural mediocrity, vulgarity and outright disaster have come indifferently from the public and private sectors (think of the Euston Centre, Centre Point, the high-rise council estates, the Barbican Arts and Conference Centre); but it is the social cost of unchecked, uncontrolled speculation which is most disastrous. It would have been useful to have a chapter which explored the implications of the mass of statistics assembled; as it is, this is an indispensable reference work for anyone who wants to understand the realities of wealth and

power in post-war London, and the significance of the innocuous-sounding term "redevelopment".

From the bleak anonymity of oral history, it is a short leap to the chatty journalistic profiles of *Londoners*, for which the author asks forgiveness in advance, pleading youth and inexperience. Given Nicholas Shakespeare's talent, and the care which went into the selection of interviewees, it is hard to forgive him the self-indulgent ironies which tend to reduce all his subjects to the same level. (One example: "Tall, blonde, her nails full of the pheasant she has just plucked, Emma Tennant stands at her Elgin Crescent window in North Kensington and remembers the day she was presented at Court.") He is better at capturing the celebrities – Lady Douro, Ken Livingstone, Feliks Topolski – than the "characters", the birdseed seller in Trafalgar Square, Lady Douro's postman, cabbies and down-and-outs. What is missing is a point of view; it is not enough simply to juxtapose priest and prostitute, merchant banker and City clerk, clubland and outcast London, as if all are equally amusing to the detached observer.

For the classic account of Londoners on the margin of existence, one turns to Henry Mayhew's letters to the *Morning Chronicle* (1849-50), reprinted here (in selections) with the original illustrations, expanded to coffee-table size by colour prints of the period. Alone of these books, *The Illustrated Mayhew's London* provides a sense not only of individuals – the crippled street-seller of nutmeg-graters, "Old Sarah", the blind hurdy-gurdy player – but of the city itself, and of the economic and social forces governing the lives of its inhabitants. Mayhew's persistent, determined research into the most minute details of the lives of the "street people" – costermongers, mud-larks, chimney-sweepers – was fuelled by anger, and still communicates a sense of outrage. No longer do old women collect "pure" (dog dung) to sell for 10d a bucketful to the tanyards along the river; but it is a fair guess that one half of society remains as ignorant of the lives of the other half, and as indifferent to their plight, as before.

*London In Detail*, the paperback version of *The London Book* (1980), has lost none of its dotty charm: 2,000 photographs, beautifully printed and assembled, of weathervanes, fan-lights, outdoor clocks, street lamps, telephone kiosks, drainpipes, knobs and knockers, chimney-pots, footscrapers, paving stones, identified solely by street address, with an occasional comment as mysterious and arbitrary as the object itself: "Male caryatids are known as atlantes, but they have never been as popular as the females." A book to treasure, along with *Mayhew's London*.

# Counting off the days

Philip Oakes

TREVOR ROYLE  
*The Best Years of Their Lives: The National Service experience 1945-63*  
288pp. Michael Joseph. £12.95.  
07181 2459 6

In Britain of the late 1940s being called up was something that happened to you shortly after your eighteenth birthday. It was a sort of coming of age which could be deferred, but rarely escaped. "No objector, other than those who objected on religious or quasi-religious grounds, ever won his case", writes Trevor Royle in his absorbing account of a generation of conscripts.

Between 1949 and 1961 the call-up claimed over two million young men who were to serve 730 days in one or another of the armed forces, marking off their time on home-made calendars, hopefully drawn in reverse order, "with numbers which were deleted each and every morning as its owner counted off the days left in the service of his sovereign". The last National Serviceman to be discharged was 2nd Lieutenant Richard Vaughan of the Royal Army Pay Corps, who was demobbed on May 13, 1963. As he shed his uniform he became (gladly, one surmises) a footnote to history.

But the title of the book is by no means ironic. It is true that an investigating committee, sponsored by the Army Council in the mid-1950s, was told by scores of disgruntled interviewees that they regarded their period of service as "an infliction to be undergone rather than a duty to the nation". But an equal number viewed it as a time of learning skills, seeing the world and, best of all, forming friendships which flourished in the face of boredom, bulimia and military boneheadedness.

National Servicemen supervised the dismantling of an empire. They garrisoned post-war

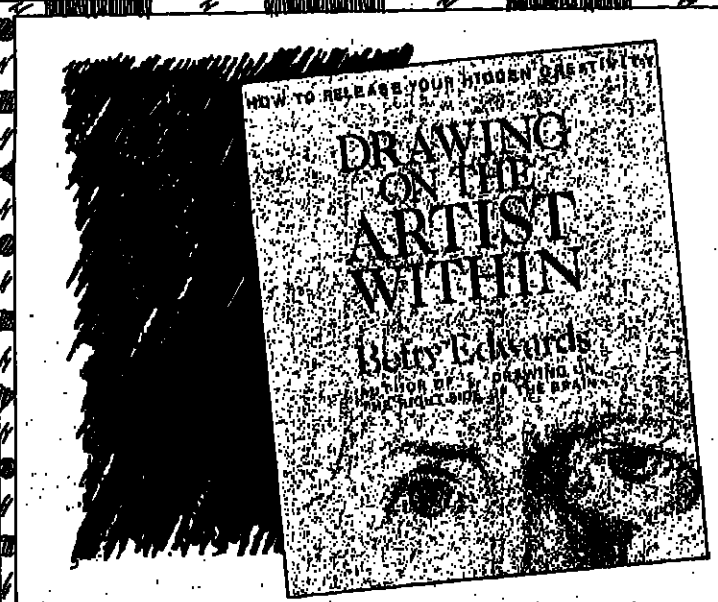
Germany and sweltered in the Canal Zone where no one had prepared them, politically or otherwise, for the loathing of the populace. They helped to flush out the Mau Mau in Kenya and fought communists (many of them former allies) in Malaya, where 264 rankers and junior officers won the Military Medal or the Military Cross for acts of gallantry. Their only full-scale war was in Korea, a bloody campaign which is remembered with bewilderment and bitterness by most of those who served there.

For all of them National Service was an extraordinary education. As Writer William Nuttall of the Royal Navy – one of the hundred conscript contributors to this book – recalls: "It was a quick growing-up course and taught me how to look after myself. I learned tact and diplomacy too, and an ability to mix with others from different social backgrounds. . . . It was an experience I feel privileged to have undergone."

National Service came to an end not because of any belated libertarian scruple on the part of our leaders, but because in the 1960s it was no longer cost-effective. And despite the occasional rumblings that it would help to restore the nation's moral fibre it is unlikely ever to be reintroduced.

*The Best Years of Their Lives* is well remembered, comprehensive and illuminating. It is worth knowing that "skiving" – succinctly defined here as "malingering to one's own advantage" – first entered the language in 1916, the year that conscription was first introduced to Britain. And it is salutary to learn that in 1982 men died in the Falklands because equipment needed for amphibious operations had not been replaced since being scrapped after 1945.

Trevor Royle has marshalled an impressive body of information, including (by way of his contributors) an anthology of service myths. But one question remains unanswered. Was bromide really added to the National Serviceman's tea to keep his libido in check? I think we should be told.



A superb new book for all teachers and psychologists, from the author of *DRAWING ON THE RIGHT SIDE OF THE BRAIN*, which shows us that learning to draw releases our hidden creativity, sharpens our perceptions of every day life and reveals aspects of our personal and professional relationships.

Collins £12.95



# The last of Tintin

Anthony Horowitz

HERGÉ

Tintin et l'Alph-Art  
Paris: Casterman. F200.  
2203 01701 5

Georges Remi died on March 3, 1983 and Tintin died with him. His name was hardly well known outside his native Belgium but his initials, reversed and spoken in French, gave Hergé. And Hergé was Tintin. Hergé never delegated. Unlike Disney, for example, he drew every frame of his books, working them up to a final, definitive stage before passing them on to his studio for the finishing touches. There may be modern "Disney" films. But another Tintin book would be unthinkable: at best a pale imitation, in Hergé's own eyes a forgery.

And that, ironically, is the subject of the adventure he was working on when he died. *Tintin et l'Alph-Art* would have been the twenty-fourth Tintin book. The preparatory drawings have now been published (in French) by Casterman in the form of an artist's sketch pad, and the reproduction is so good that it almost feels like the real thing. Bound in with it is a text that explains the frequently minimal sketches and sets the captions out in print. Hergé had worked on only forty-two pages of the sixty-two-page story and of these, only the first three are anywhere near complete. A woodpecker taps at a tree outside Marlinspike Hall. Captain Haddock, half-asleep, mistakes it for someone at the door and mumbles for them to come in. Bianca Castafiore enters with a bottle of his favourite whisky, then changes into a gigantic woodpecker. The Captain yells out and Tintin comes running, only to be floored by a punch thrown by the sleeping man. It has all been a nightmare, but then of

course the real Castafiore turns up. From these pages it is clear that, ill though he was, Hergé still retained his mastery of form and movement as well as the cheerful acceptance of the ridiculous that characterized all his work.

In his last adventure, Tintin is on the trail of a number of missing art critics. He first gets involved in the art world when Captain Haddock buys himself a bizarre sculpture in the form of a large letter H. This is the alph-art invented by one Ramo Nash. "He evokes the origins of civilization", Castafiore enthuses. "The wheel, the fire, the hard boiled egg . . ." But Nash is also a master forger of, among others, Renoir and Picasso. And somehow he is connected to a mysterious modern cult and a guru called Endaddine who is himself not what he seems.

All the hallmarks of Hergé at his best are there: the eccentric characters, the secret symbols, the mystery villain, the mixture of comedy and suspense. As ever, Tintin the journalist never goes near a typewriter. And that famous quiff is still perfectly in place. The only pity is that there is not quite enough of *Tintin et l'Alph-Art* to appeal to any but the more enthusiastic – and certainly adult – Tintin followers. For them, it will be a joy. "That voice", Tintin muses as he listens to Endaddine. "It reminds me of someone – but who?" Who indeed? Is some old enemy lurking behind those dark glasses and beard? Are the alph-art and the guru one and the same? Just as *Edwin Drood* has its interpreters, so surely will the last Tintin.

The adventure ends, abruptly, with Tintin a prisoner once again and about to be immersed in plastic to end his days as a statue in a museum. "How will I get out of it this time?" he asks before he is led out of his cell at gunpoint. He walks into the stark whiteness of an empty page. Hergé is dead. And for Tintin, at last, there can be no escape.

## Collectors' items

Brian Alderson

PETER DÜSTERDIECK et al  
Die Sammlung Hobrecker der  
Universitätsbibliothek Braunschweig: Katalog  
der Kinder- und Jugendliteratur 1565-1945  
Two volumes. 1,157pp. Munich: K. G. Saur.  
DM480.  
3398105592

THEODOR BRÜGGEMANN  
Kinder- und Jugendliteratur: Kommentierte  
Katalog der Sammlung  
Theodor Brüggemann  
316pp. H. Th. Wenner. DM140.  
3378983042

Karl Hobrecker was born near Dortmund on Christmas Day 1876. It was a seasonal date for someone who was to become one of the great collectors of early children's books, and the flair and commitment which he brought to that activity place him alongside such contemporaries as F. J. Harvey Darton in England and Wilbur Macey Stone in America: founding fathers of the bibliographical study of children's literature.

However, while Darton's collection was sold *en bloc* in the 1920s, "in the stress of the peace", and while Stone's books were dispersed with cheerful generosity all over the place, Karl Hobrecker's collection was wrecked by the Second World War. In 1933 some 12,000 volumes were lodged in the "State Youth Library" of the Hitler Jugend in Berlin with Hobrecker and his wife as curators (despite their distaste for the political system that adopted them). With the destruction of the city in 1945 both the collectors and the collection disappeared and, although little more is known of Karl Hobrecker and his wife, who both died soon after the war, over 4,000 of their books are now in the University Library at Braunschweig, where they form the core element of the collection set forth in Peter Düsterdieck's two-volume catalogue.

The Braunschweig catalogue has all the utilitarian graces of those standard Saur/Kraus/G. K. Hall compilations which are made by plucking down catalogue cards in a gridiron layout and then photographing them. The user is given basic information about the library's holdings –

aided by eight computer-generated indexes – but the method is not well adapted to clarifying complex entries (eg, the six volumes of Schroeder's *Allgemeine Weltgeschichte*, Leipzig, 1779-84) and there is little bibliographical help over bindings or the modes and disposition of illustrations.

Karl Hobrecker, who seems to have been a fastidious collector, would probably have been saddened by this characterless representation of some of his books. Whatever the cost, he would surely have preferred to see his library given the affectionate treatment that is accorded to the 405 volumes at Frankfurt, or to the 932 volumes from the collection of Theodor Brüggemann of Cologne. (Dr Brüggemann is of the generation that has benefited from the pioneer work of such as Karl Hobrecker, as witness his majestic *Handbuch zur Kinder- und Jugendliteratur*, the first volume of which was published by Metzler of Stuttgart in 1982.)

*Sammlung Brüggemann* is an elegantly produced, heavily illustrated work, which seeks not only to list the collector's many rare and attractive books, dating from 1498 to 1984, but also to provide citations that help to place each of them in an historical or generic context. Thus, where Düsterdieck is content merely to give a bald five lines of card to a book like *Jahr und Tag* (Stuttgart, 18477), without noting either its illustrator or the apparent imperfections of the Brunswick example, Brüggemann devotes twenty-four lines to his copy, discussing the problematic dating and the illustrations (by J. M. Voltz) and adding an illustration for good measure. Brüggemann is also indexed in all directions, and includes a six-page bibliography, so that it serves the double purpose of being the helpful record of an individual collection and a commentary on questions raised by that collection. Given our still undeveloped knowledge of the bibliography of children's books, that is surely a more vital contribution than the bare, unannotated piling up of catalogue cards.

*Bright Lights Blaze Out* (48pp. Oxford University Press, £4.95, 0 19 276559 9), the latest collection in the *Three Poets* series for children, contains works by Alan Bold, Catech Owen and Julia O'Callaghan.



Michael Foreman's drawing of the bear Baloo, from a new edition of Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Book* (175pp. Viking Kestrel. £8.95, 0 670 80241 7), which has recently been published with a companion volume *Just So Stories*.

## Saintly schooldays

David Robey

EDMONDO DE AMICIS

*Cuore: The heart of a boy*  
Translated by Desmond Hartley  
253pp. Peter Owen/UNESCO. £11.95.  
02206 06578

The two great children's classics of nineteenth-century Italy first appeared within a few years of each other: Carlo Collodi's *Pinochio* in 1880, Edmondo de Amicis's *Cuore* in 1886. Both met with enormous, rapid success, in Italy and abroad; in less than forty years, for instance, well over a million copies of *Cuore* were printed. But while both books clearly suited the mood of their time, *Cuore* has fared a great deal less well since. *Pinochio* has become universal reading for children; in Italy some children apparently still read *Cuore*, but it is hard to imagine them liking the book, although their parents might enjoy it.

Both books are strongly moralistic, and speak loudly in favour of hard work, honesty, courage, kindness, love and respect for parents. *Cuore* is also distinguished by a vaguely socialist egalitarianism, in particular an insistence on the dignity of manual labour, the importance of education and concern for the plight of the poor, together with a patriotic theme of a strongly post-Risorgimento character. Both writers had taken part in the struggle for unification, and the books were a conscious contribution to the new Italy's moral education. To the modern reader that sounds like a guarantee of tedium. *Pinochio* is saved from this by the engaging fantasy of the story, the light touch of its moralizing and its tone of comic tolerance. *Cuore*, unfortunately, wholly lacks such qualities. It is a realistic novel, much more explicitly moralistic, and devoid of any humour. Yet it is by no means dull to read.

It is the diary of a single elementary school year – apparently 1881-2 – in Turin, written by a boy at the school, and interspersed with comments by his parents and a series of exemplary moral tales, one for each month, about boys from different regions of Italy. Enrico, the pious, conforming and sensitive diarist, occasionally naughty but basically good, records his impressions of his schoolfellows and a variety of major and minor events at the school, in the homes of the pupils, and elsewhere in the city.

The book lacks a coherent plot, but is pleasantly varied. The different social classes are represented, and a wide range of moral types, from the golden-haired, unbelievably decent Dorso, who is always top of the class, to the villain Pranti, who laughs at everything (including the anniversary of the King's death and his dying mother) and is eventually expelled. As well as a series of exemplary actions, economic hardship, physical suffering and death feature largely, though always in the light of De Amicis's humanitarian, fundamentally optimistic morality.

Italians nowadays tend not to like *Cuore*, no doubt mainly because of its solemn, sentimental rhetoric: "It was good to see how warmly you embraced your mother, Enrico, when you came home from religious instruction"; "Uncover your head, you wretch, when an injured workman goes by"; "Teacher – which after that of father is the noblest, the dearest name one man can give to another." Seen with hindsight, also, *Cuore*'s politics are definitely reactionary. For all its vague socialism, it speaks out clearly for the existing order: "You see, men from the higher social classes are the officers, and workmen are the soldiers of work"; or "Let it be seen that your young hearts can glow and that your ten-year-old spirits can soar in the presence of the sacred symbols of your country."

Umberto Eco has argued in a well-known essay that the real hero of the book is the villainous Franti, the only character with a sense of humour. Like the lost book of Aristotle's *Poetics* in *The Name of the Rose*, Franti's laughter, for Eco, is a challenge to the existing social order, the expression of a counterculture which calls into question everything society holds sacred. This is one way of rescuing *Cuore*, though it makes a small part of the book carry an inordinate amount of weight. In a more detached mood, looking at *Cuore* from outside Italy, it is easier to like it simply as a readable period piece: an interesting if slanted set of descriptions of nineteenth-century urban life, and a forceful, quite moving expression of faith in human potential, human brotherhood and the value of education.

Enrico's diary, the author tells us, was revised by his father and then again by Enrico himself a few years later, a fiction which purportedly accounts for *Cuore*'s dignified, balanced and fluent Manzonian language. On the whole this language is accurately rendered in Desmond Hartley's new translation, which presumably celebrates the centenary of the book's publication. On occasion, perhaps, the English reads rather stiffly, but that is in keeping with the spirit, if not the letter, of the original.

*Illustrated Children's Books* by John Barr (80pp, with 67 illustrations. British Library. £4.95, 0 7123 0098 8) is one of a new series of books on the British Library's holdings in particular fields. Barr, who is Assistant Keeper with special responsibility for children's literature in the British Library, surveys the history of illustrated children's books from the late eighteenth century to the 1920s. The early part of the book is devoted to innovations in printing and publishing which led to the production of chap-books, pocket-books, alphabets and primers. In the second half individual artists such as Randolph Caldecott, Kate Greenaway, Walter Crane and Edward Lear are discussed.

## The import of seeing Ernst

Roz Kaveney

ALAN BURNS

*Revolutions of the Night*  
163pp. Allison and Busby. £9.95.  
0850317347

There is a particular kind of experimental fiction that falls into the same category as some over-zealous and unsuitable guides; anxious to make sure that the reader gets the full benefit of whatever literary game is being played, it nudges hard and winks as regularly as clockwork. Alan Burns's new novel all too often falls into this category; there would be much to be enjoyed and praised in it were the whole thing conducted in a less aggressive manner – had the author, perhaps, been less sure that his original good idea was so overwhelmingly good that little need be added to it.

In its early stages, *Revolutions of the Night* appears to be a reasonably conventional narrative of family life. Max's wife has died and he has married his mistress Martha, to the displeasure of his own father and of his two children, Hazel and Harry, whose displeasure takes the form partly of lying around being insolent, partly of incestuous flirtation and partly of affairs outside the home. Hazel embroils herself with an older businessman, Bob, who, she gradually realizes, is representative of all that is unwholesome about the ruling class, and whom she throws from a balcony. Harry has an affair with the bargirl and laundress, Louise; he is caught up in a demonstration and radicalized in gaol. Finally the siblings flee across one of those frontiers so beloved of surrealists in the 1930s and sit in a small cottage being virtuous. This farrago of a fiction is told in a style of notable artlessness and affectlessness, which makes more rather than less obtrusive the fact that none of it has any particular weight or importance in the author's imaginative project.

What that project is might almost have been deduced from the title the book shares with the Max Ernst painting which Allison and Busby

thoughtfully reproduce on the cover. The action regularly pauses so that the characters can fall into tableaux, each of which is in fact a description of a surrealist painting, most of them recognizable as the work of Ernst. At a fancy-dress ball, for example, Bob appears first in a red eagle head-dress, then disguised as an elephant; the final elegiac description of a ruined city and its inhabitants is also a description of "Europe After the Rain", which gave its title to perhaps the most satisfactory of Burns's fictions. And, of course, in his volumes of *collages*, in which elements of Victorian prints are rearranged in just such a diffuse, implied narrative line as that in the novel, Ernst himself made an experimental gesture to which Burns is paying overt homage.

And that is the trouble with this accomplished but ultimately rather pointless book. When Ernst made his *collages*, he was exploding conventional perceptions of reality with conjunctions of the variant realities we know from dreams, which the Surrealists wanted to put in the forefront of art to baffle and terrify us. When Burns plays what appears to be a similar game, he is gratifying our bourgeois urge to feel self-satisfied at recognizing what were once thrilling mental adventures and have become sitting-room icons of the Modern Movement. Literature, in any case, was never especially suited to overt surrealism; it is always too much in need of small doses of the miraculous and the dreamlike to be able, or to want, to take them undiluted. When, in the past, Burns has been justly praised, it has been for works like his *Europe After the Rain* in which surrealism, affectlessness and the arbitrary are perhaps the most effective ways of saying something – in that particular case portraying the full horror of war and revolution. There is no joke to *Europe After the Rain*, nor any game that is not being played for keeps. Much in *Revolutions of the Night* is admirable, it offers much elegant prose and some charming moments of rococo whimsy, but in the end, with its casual recitals of horrors and humour in the same breath, its unlikely devices, it lacks seriousness, even seriousness about its own purpose and technique.

## Friends and family

Christopher Hawtree

ROBERT LIDDELL

*The Aunts*  
192pp. Peter Owen. £10.95.  
07206 06659

"It is very easy to be wonderful if one can only manage to remain in this world for eighty years or so; an octogenarian need do little more than blow his own nose to win applause", remarks a character in *The Almond Tree*, Robert Liddell's first novel, published in 1938, when he was thirty. Taking as its subject a breed familiar from his last novel, the potentially libellous *Sleazens* (1969), itself a sequel to *Kind Relations* of 1939, *The Aunts* is no mere blowing of the nose but more than enough to make one regret that it should have taken so long to appear.

To say that it could have been written at any time since the events of the late 1930s which it describes is not to be scornful. In his fiction Liddell has created a world so fully realized that each novel, whether set in England or abroad, appears to be as much part of an unobtrusive pattern as do those of his friends, Barbara Pym, Elizabeth Taylor and Ivy Compton-Burnett. While the restraint of last year's memoir *Elizabeth and Ivy* was merely frustrating (especially Liddell's repeated admission that he had destroyed the two novelists' correspondence), the same quality in his novels serves to make them more substantial than so many which have only the clouds of sensation about them.

One is far from surprised when a character here is able to correct another's misapprehensions about Jane Austen; with a subtlety equal to hers Liddell reveals the economic basis of society. In *The Aunts* he goes somewhat further than she was able to do – in one respect, at least. "Do you feel any shame about our past?" asks a solicitor, Philip Mil-

som, of his friend, the priest James Freeling, both now lodging in a spa whose lack of a name does not detract from its quiet credibility. "So long past!" replies the man of the cloth: "Not now, so far as 'human respect' goes. I regret sin in tantum peccatum in so far as it was sin, an offence against God, disobedience. But good can come out of evil, and the consequences seem to me entirely good. I have, I hope, contrition, but no remorse."

Good sense and adjustment to their new, cosy circumstances are ruffled by relations between Philip's nearby aunts, the easy-going Eliza and the cantankerous Jane, married to George who is himself no less jovial for being crippled by arthritis. "I've been impotent for years, as I dare say your Aunt Jane has conveyed to you with her customary delicacy," he remarks to Philip. "She doesn't mind, of course. Never did. I think she was rather pleased than otherwise. But she likes thinking she has been done out of something that was her due."

While events across the Channel march dreadfully on, those in England, with Aunt Jane stopping at nothing to satisfy similar, albeit vicarious hopes of conquest, bring as much emotional havoc in their train. However farcical this threatens to become, what with the arrival of a camp friend of Philip's from Oxford (now an up-market travel agent), an unmarried niece and even a masseuse for George, the novel never loses touch with the sense of reality which results, as much as anything, from dextrous handling of the conversation in which a large part of the story is told. Never leaving one at a loss as to who is talking, and able to shift mood in the space of a page or less, Liddell also brings a precise sense of description to bear, an unerring appreciation of such incongruities as Aunt Jane's "entering in the bad temper that so often follows church-going". If, just once, he adapts an image familiar from *Kind Relations* – a lady with a fork fitted into her wooden arm – then he can hardly be blamed for that, unduly neglected as his novels have been. It is some thing which *The Aunts* ought to put right.

## Oh God yes

Richard Deveson

HUGH FLEETWOOD

*The Past*  
199pp. Hamish Hamilton. £10.95.  
0241 119847

Oh God oh God oh God oh God oh God.

It's not as if, the reviewer thought, it's just the syntax. Which is hard enough to take, consisting as it does of relative clauses posing as sentences. And of phrases beginning with "And". Or "Or". Except that the sentences, unmercifully, are usually very much longer, the reviewer reflected, consisting as they do of repetitions, of saying the same thing more than once, so to speak, of using different words to express, as it were, identical propositions; not that, the reviewer mused, that's the only way in which the sentences contrive to stretch themselves down the long, long pages, fleshed out as they are with (sometimes they're in parentheses) multiple embeddings, and with – he couldn't suppress a recognitive "Gosh" as he recognized them – camp quotations, and with sundry imprecatory quantities of, oh God yes, nothing in particular that, after an endless time, finally become mired in their own – and though the closure has been long awaited, the last word always comes with a soft slap of anticlimax – sludge.

But it isn't only, the reviewer brooded, the syntax. Because the story of *The Past* (and it purports – but he couldn't suppress a recogni-

## Medium crack

Tim Dooley

J. M. O'NEILL

*Duffy is Dead*  
186pp. Heinemann. £10.95.  
0434 553409

Duffy, "a contented foster child of the State", "untouched by any blemish of work", dies in the opening pages of retired publican J. M. O'Neill's second novel. The news of his passing is brought to Calnan, licensee of the Trade Winds in Dalston, by a pair of dubious chancers, Neeland and Mackessy. Their attempts to turn to their own profit the arrangements Calnan makes for his former customer's funeral and the canny, brandy-soaked landlord's attempts to outwit them form the central strand of this genial and atmospheric tale.

The poker-faced humour of this duel of fuddled wits is interrupted by a rather inconse-

quential subplot concerning Duffy's career as a medium among genteel Stoke Newington spiritualists, melodramatic turns of events like the visit of the Anti-Terrorist Squad to Calnan's premises, and some rather maudlin ruminations on urban rootlessness. A virtue of *Duffy is Dead* is its wealth of minor characters – marginality of position marrying extravagance of invention in such memorable creations as the Clincher, an undertaker specializing in "lower end of the market embarkations", Morgan, the pub's loyal "sheet-anchor", and Brennan, its repulsive and lugubrious pot-man.

As the novel's outlandish plot creaks to a close, Calnan has got the better of his rapacious opponents, seen Duffy buried and waked with an acceptable mixture of chaos and style, lost his licence and been offered a new career by Cassie, the neighbourhood's red-light "physiotherapist". On the way, O'Neill has created a convincing caricature of London Irish pub life – a warm, buttonholing world of broad winks, venomous understatement, tall stories and "good crack".

## Getting to the start

Anna Vaux

LORNA PEGRAM

*Long Way Home*  
211pp. Martin Brian and O'Keefe. £9.95.  
0856163112

Although *Long Way Home* takes place in a constantly shifting landscape and charts the through-routes and byways of self-discovery, it is a neat and contained story. But then, Lorna Pegram is an extremely neat novelist who characteristically, like her heroine's father who lives in a "ship-shape flat like a taxi", tidies up the interesting bits and moves quickly on to the next. Her characters are lost and found in an orderly way, and with censorious accuracy: the good may go the way of the bad, but the niceties of sin are bypassed. Indeed, Pegram packs away her grand ideas so that what might have been a large story is in fact a very slight one.

There is, none the less, a lot of coming and going. The novel starts on a cross-channel ferry with a chance meeting between Pegram's two heroines, Penn and Marcella. (Ships, taxis and buses play a large part in a story governed by departures, arrivals, and timetable stopovers.) Both women are going home. But they arrive to discover that home is neither where nor what they thought it was, and hesitantly set

out again – Marcella in search of her runaway father ("the idea of finding her father had seized her as a cause, a quest, and in itself an answer to her sense of not belonging"), Penn in search of her runaway youth, and both in search of a "home in love and salvation".

Chance, however, operates with suspect precision, and the story progresses through accidents and coincidences that interweave their lives with calculated inevitability. Despite Pegram's sometimes fine observations, characters behave exactly as we expect them to: on time and at full gallop. The crisis point of the story, when Marcella finally catches up with her father and, to her horror – but with perfect symmetry – finds Penn who has been sleeping with him, is dealt with in a matter of paragraphs, a few slammed doors, and a watered-down sense of self-sacrifice. Other figures retreat and advance, but are little more than functions in a plot that eventually brings Penn and Marcella back home to where they started.

The story is a moral one, and Pegram's point is that the end is where we start from – although we spend our lives just getting there. But her heroines are brought home less by default than by design. Emotions are fitted to the time of year or the flowers in season, and each disruption is exactly in place in a scheme which sets an end to all our journeying, but which in its haste to get on evades life altogether.



## The alternative voice

Robert Sheppard

ADRIAN HENRI  
Collected Poems 1967-85  
311pp. Allison and Busby. £12.95.  
085031 6553

ROGER MCGOUGH  
Melting into the Foreground  
77pp. Viking. £6.95.  
0670812897

MICHAEL HOROVITZ, with drawings by PETER BLAKE  
Midsummer Morning Jog Log  
38pp. Five Seasons Press. £8.95.  
094796007

SYLVIA PASKIN, JAY RAMSAY and JEREMY SILVER (Editors)  
Angels of Fire: An anthology of Radical poetry in the '80s  
170pp. Chatto and Windus. £5.95.  
0701130741

TOM PICKARD  
Custom & Exile  
64pp. Allison and Busby. £4.  
085031 657X

BARRY MCSWEENEY  
Ranter  
40pp. Slow Dancer Press. £3.  
0950747955

Over the last twenty-five years there have been various terms for kinds of poetry that have attempted to counter the dominance of the Movement orthodoxy, or whichever orthodoxy replaced it, in British verse: Pop, Beat, Underground, Experimental and - latterly - Radical poetry. Each has seemed in danger of establishing an alternative grouping - even orthodoxy: the terms have often led to excessive typecasting of poets' works, by supporters and detractors alike, and to the neglect of any poet who refused to conform to the concealed manifesto.

Adrian Henri was the best of the 1960s Liverpool poets, who derived part of their popularity from the Beatles, and their aesthetic orientation - in Henri's case, at least - from modernism and Pop. Art. The result was a poetry poppier than Pop. This litany is typical, its dated imagery drawn from the consumer society during a period of economic optimism:

I want a love  
as intimate as feminine deodorant  
As easily disposed of  
as paper underwear  
As fresh as  
the last slice of sliced bread

There is a built-in adolescence, as well as obscurity, here; reading the early work in Henri's *Collected Poems* can provide an enjoyable, possibly nostalgic, view of the 1960s and early 70s. But Henri was so tied to media representations and images that he only rarely addressed the deadlier side of that era, and did so only through the reiteration of his customary obsessions - for example his frequent schoolgirl eroticisms.

### Cooking Fish

The four fish, though made slack-bellied, were plump-backed and bright, gave your fingers a sea smell that lingered.

Visceral gravies leaked out still at the rough slit from pinhole arse to gills from which the guts had spilled.

Flexible aeroplanes, a quartet of blue moons gridded till their eyes were white, and then antiatomised.

Their ghosts, savoury and clinging all evening and by the morning almost vanished - till you made toast.

DOMINIC FISHER

Will telling my love for you change the Universe?  
Will telling you walking to school in winter morning  
darkness

cold in your brown uniform  
keep the Napalm from one frightened child?

Whereas in early poems, such as "The Entry of Christ into Liverpool", Henri was drawn to the city (often demonstrating an excessive debt to Eliot), recent poems have tended to be bucolic meditations. The private poems have become mawkish and melancholy; the public ones elegiac (remembering Elvis Presley, Mao and John Lennon). Henri seems aware that he has seen better days.

Roger McGough has always been more of a music hall comedian, less of a pop artist, than Henri; he is at his best when he is being funny, whether with his excruciating quick-fire punning ("William, the Conqueror") or with ordinary conversational wit, for which he has an alert ear ("When people ask: 'How are you?' / I say, 'Bits of me are fine.'"). This new volume, *Melting into the Foreground*, claims to extend his range and he follows Henri's *Autobiography in writing* about his family background, but the gravity of his subject matter is unsuited to the levity of his tone and the laxity of his diction. And, like Henri, he has a nostalgia for traditional forms, which he handles ineptly:

Get out and get arse'oled.  
Have fun playing the fool.  
It's a joy to be old.  
The dog dead and the car sold.

The volume's simplicity makes it easy to read but irritating to re-read.

Michael Horowitz was the English Beat of the early 1960s who later anthologized the poetry of the British "Underground" in his erratic but valuable *Children of Albion*. Like Henri, and like his illustrator in his latest book, Peter Blake, Horowitz has turned to rural themes, though the result is far from meditative. *Midsummer Morning Jog Log* is a rhapsody of impressions which attempts to capture, at a running pace, the "minute particulars" of a Blakean perception of nature. Unfortunately, this clod-hopping ramble tends to the bathetic. Witness Horowitz's insect:

Instantly, ruthlessly, tapped to the past  
with fearful shrieks, disinfestants and aspersions cast  
including the contemptuous designation: bug  
which gets applied indiscriminately to flea, snail and slug

*Angels of Fire* is not an exhaustive anthology of Radical poetry - which is a pity, given the lack of such a book - but concentrates on work presented at three annual festivals. Like Horowitz's anthology, to which it is an heir, it is eclectic, ranging from Jay Ramsay's own "psyche poetry" to Bill Griffiths's found texts; to Jeremy Silver's anti-nuclear lyrics to Valerie Bloom's West Indian dialect pieces; to the scribbled anarchism of Oandhai vs The Daleks to the quiet lyricism of Tony Lopez. Some of the contents are undistinguished and imitative, adopting a tone of righteous indignation at a spiritless, uncaring world, or a received contemporary diction to poeticize dis-

sent. Either way this works, as much as anything in Henri, in collusion with the mass media's demands for easy comprehensibility and immediate consumption. The best conventional writers, often, are the women (half of the contributors are female): Judith Kazantzis, Bloom, and Michele Roberts in her disturbing "The Oyster Woman" and epiphany "On Highbury Hill". The anthology's introduction hopes for a radicalism whereby politics and language "are worked together", but Allen Fisher, in "Banda", politicizes his use of a non-linear language:

The schemers dreamed a finite language  
where innocence became post-experiential  
believing the measurable, ultra-violet from a lamp,  
isolated twilight curvature  
made false language what can be done  
to separate  
from perception.

Such work, wrongly called "Experimental", uses a poetic of indeterminacy to encourage the reader towards a "radical" engagement, to resolve its multiple ambiguities: "The quantum leap / between some lines / so wide / it hurts".

Tom Pickard and Barry MacSweeney have both suffered as a result of the attempt to manufacture a Geordie version of Pop poetry, but both have resisted it; the presence and early assistance of Basil Bunting guided them away from such excesses. In Pickard's latest book, *Custom & Exile*, he has refined his objectivism to produce the best poems he has written since the early 1970s (one of which is a fine elegy to Bunting). Fidelity to perception is at a premium, as in "Owl":

almost  
perceptible

warm breath  
wings in my ear

This contrasts with the stark found material of "The Skaman Report", on the Brixton Riots,

## A nostalgia for belief

Michael O'Neill

DANNIE ABSE  
Ask the Bloody Horse  
56pp. Hutchinson. £3.95.  
0091639719

Both the charm and the limitations of *Ask the Bloody Horse* are highlighted by the fact that its poems are never so cheerfully wise or conversationally at ease as when they display their obsessive interest in the mysterious. In "Quests" Dannie Abse presents desire for "the other world" with a detachment which shades into regret in the last tercet: "Who knows? Not me. Secular. / I'll never hear / the spheres, their perfect orchestra, or below, / with joy, old Triton playing out of tune". Asserting the poet's secular stance, the lines half-humorously betray a nostalgia for belief. Though the shoulder-shrugging ruefulness (signalled by the nod at Wordsworth in the last line) is attractive, it threatens to neutralize urgency.

Several poems flirt with what Abse calls "numinous hauntings". Such hauntings, however, are rarely imagined from within; more often, they are the object of remote gesturings. In "Encounter at a Greyhound bus station" Abse meets a sentimentalized "unwashed" antagonist-cum-alter ego who challenges the poet's disbelief, but merely prompts this well-meaning response: "And what could I, secular, say to that? / That I'm deaf to God but not in combat?". The poet's blend of humour, scepticism and residual piety works better in poems which play more imaginatively with different ways of viewing experience. "A scream" brings contrasting emotions - fear and wonder - into intriguingly loose connection. Abse's fluent rhythms, diffusely musical internal rhymes and casual run-ons are appropriate for the poem's switch of direction. In this poem and others ("A WOL", "Millie's date" and "The sacred disease" are examples) Abse occupies an unpredictable no-man's-land between rationalism and a wry longing for faith or magic.

There is much wit and exuberance in "Hotel nights", a sequence which at once parodies and

and with the welfare state dependant of "If the Sod left me in Peace". There are some political swipes here, but the quality that delights and haunts most is that of discovery, of fortuitous uncovering, as in "In Search of Ingenious":

between idolize  
and ILO  
a violet  
whose moth petals  
hover on  
ignotum per ignotum  
explanation  
obscures the object

MacSweeney's *Ranter* is a long mythological narrative poem, featuring a metamorphosing trickster, a bird-wolf-man in his "feathered skin", a spirit of angry radical dissent who ranges over a number of historical and contemporary landscapes. The transferable hero has been tried too often in recent years, but MacSweeney invests it with agonized urgency, assisted by a recurring two-beat line that drives this multi-layered poem along. *Ranter's* northern radicalism acknowledges history ("Lester, Lollard, / Luddite, Man of Kent, / Tyneside / broadsheet printer") and predicts the future ("I will be back / again & again"), although the present is a time of defeat and despair. *Ranter* is doomed to metamorphosis and flight:

loper, glider,  
dashing for game,  
loading his gun,  
cleaning his blade  
strangler of cries,  
particularly his own  
driver and driven

The poem ends with a moving lament by *Ranter's* bride, a tender and searing exemplification of how political anger can pervert personal desire:

Ranter, love, broken prince  
crowned with bracken by  
bullies just like you.

celebrates Judaic fervour: "I could smell the singed wings of cherubim. / I took off the other sock and began to dance". Yet Abse's treatment of the religious impulse never oversteps certain cautiousness. *Ask the Bloody Horse* is more at home with semi-comic glimpses of strangeness, as in "Somewhere"; or with the eerie cadences of "The merry-go-round at night", which, described as "A variation of Rilke's 'Dns Karussell'", is one of the finest poems in this accomplished collection:

Look! From another world this strange, lit routine.  
A boy on a steer, whooping, loud as dynamite -  
a sheriff, no doubt, though dressed in sailor-blue.  
And here comes the unicorn painted white.

The poems in David Sutton's *Rhins* (48pp. Liskard: Peterloo. £3.00/5291 78-6), yoked together by a consistent, if cautious, temperament, move easily between loose, beguiling description and terse metaphysics, pausing either to take in the "lexicons of tree and flower" or to "gnaw... at truth's marrow-bone". There is an air of contemplation, sometimes of reverence, about the poems, but little sign of sentimentality; the language holds each piece at arm's length from itself. Even when "things happen" in his poetry, the sense of drama is weakened by Sutton's determination to concentrate on the fine distinctions, neat metaphors and oblique observations that fill his work.

The insistence that the writing should be at once sensitive and direct is itself a powerful theme in the volume: "Now words must take the place of love's first language"; we are taught to dread those moments when "Sometimes behind the words of those you meet / You come upon a lost unshareable / Hinterland" - not a grave threat to Sutton's own work, for each poem revels in its own precision and clarity. Dealing with fragments of scenes, with moments captured, lives observed and crisply, quietly recorded, what kind of picture do the poems give us? Sutton's verdict "On a Book of Nature Photography" preempts our own feelings: "how they build / These pages, to a celebrated world. / Here things speak for themselves within the frame. / Of love's attentive silence."

George Nathan

## Breaking the silence

Jean Hanff Korelitz

DEBORAH TALL  
The Island of the White Cow: Memories of an Irish island  
234pp. Deutsch. £8.95.  
0233978852

In the early 1970s, Deborah Tall met, fell for and subsequently ran off with "Owen", an Irish poet and visiting lecturer at her university. Together they lived for five years on Inishbofin, a small island off Connemara with a population of fishermen and farmers. She adjusted well to the lack of plumbing and electricity, the extreme cold and minimal contact with the outside world and, against all odds - her nationality (American), religion (Jewish) and marital status (living with but not married to Owen) - was accepted by the Inishbofin community.

In publishing *The Island of the White Cow*, a memoir of her life on the island, Deborah Tall may have sacrificed that acceptance, for in doing so she has defied the edict of silence that greeted her as a writer on Inishbofin. "Yur not goin' writin' this down, are ye?" an islander asks her, somewhat warily, but Tall also recognizes the desire to tell:

In truth, they long for ears to pour their secret grievances into, even after having been burned by, of all people, a former priest who twenty years ago wrote a merciless gossip book about his stint on the island.

Not that she made her decision lightly; it was only after returning to America that she set out to tell the secrets of Inishbofin in order to preserve in some form a way of life that was fast receding from the island she had grown to love: "While I was here I respected a self-imposed prohibition against writing about the island... But I have decided I must document this place, must take up the record... because I fear no one here is taking it up, and I can't bear the thought of its loss."

Tall has put her skills as an observer to good use, regarding with compassion but without judgment the layers of honour and pettiness, wisdom and superstition which form island hierarchies and shape daily life. A crippled girl is regarded by the community as a just punish-

ment for her unmarried mother. The local nurse, also part-owner in the island's only inn, is deeply resented for her relative prosperity. Tall finds many examples, too, of the often desperate depression of island life: elderly women who talk only to themselves or to the fires they never stir from, or the solitude of "The Flame", an old man disliked in the community:

We sometimes see him at night through the bare window sitting bent at the edge of his sagged bed eating corned beef out of a tin can, his sunken eyes staring into the wall - a staggering portrait of loneliness.

The community of 190 left on Inishbofin is as endangered today as was the Great Blasket Island community in the years before its final evacuation in the 1950s. Stripped of its youth by emigration, the island has lost its spirit as well, and island traditions threaten to die out along with the mainly elderly populace. Evacuation is not a solution; when Tall visits the evacuated island next to Inishbofin she finds abandoned houses untouched since the day of evacuation sixteen years before, tables "still littered with breakfast dishes from the last morning of habitation... Nothing brought out for the new life on the mainland." Island life does not reproduce itself when transplanted; it simply vanishes.

Even if the Inishbofin community does survive, survival will not be without a price; already the twentieth century and the influence of the mainland have made inroads. The boat that carried Tall back for a return visit in the early 1980s also carried electricity poles, and islanders greeted her with questions about forthcoming episodes of *Dallas*. But while Tall mourns the changes, she defends the islanders' right to ease their lives: "Knowing hardship as they do, aren't they right to eliminate it wherever they can? They can't be blamed for wanting washing machines and freezers."

One way or another, Inishbofin is, as one islander says, "a dying island". The disclosures of *The Island of the White Cow* may not be appreciated on the island itself but, for the rest of us, Tall's beautifully written "long letter home" is a moving and engrossing reminder of how much has already been lost.

## Nomadic insights

Alan Barnard

LAURENS VANDER POST  
A Walk with a White Bushman: Laurens van der Post in conversation with Jean-Marc Pottiez  
326pp. Chatto and Windus. £12.95.  
0701131683

Reading Laurens van der Post's earlier books during my own wanderings in the Kalahari, I have always thought he was living in a fantasy world - a world which, for better or worse, bears only passing reference to the mundane world of science and scholarship, or of real Bushmen making their living from the desert. *A Walk with a White Bushman* confirms it. Van der Post's Africa is no specific part of Africa; even the Bushmen he describes are not any specific one of the many diverse Bushman groups. They are the Bushmen of his imagination and, he seems to be saying, the world he sees is at least in part the world of their imagination.

Images, not facts, are the stand-by of the romantic, and images and romance are the essence of van der Post's writing. They govern the facts as he pursues a trail into the unconscious, collective mind of humanity, which is as real to him as everyday life, and which he aims to make accessible to the rest of us. For him, the Jungian notion of the collective unconscious is more important than the personal unconscious or personal consciousness, and he is unusual, even among romantics, for subscribing to a mental mode which most of us have little knowledge of. Whether or not we call it the collective unconscious, he attributes it to the primitive in us, but, by his own admission, it is keener in van der Post himself and in the Bushmen than in ordinary Western men.

But this book is not about the Bushmen; it is

about the author - van der Post as "Bushman", as he imagines him to be. Like the Bushmen, he wanders from place to place, collecting the necessities of life and increasing his awareness and his mystical insight into a world others only dimly see. This he displays on topics ranging from politics to philosophy, from psychology to anthropology, theology, history and folklore. While he may disdain some of these as academic subjects, his reflections on them do, even when jumbled together like this, give one food for thought. He moves freely, probably too freely, from Shakespeare to St Paul, from Margaret Thatcher to Winston Churchill, from the Falklands to South Africa. He has opinions on almost everything and a world-view which is as eclectic as it is eccentric.

*A Walk with a White Bushman* is autobiography, but as far from a conventional autobiography as his earlier book, *The Heart of a Hunter*, was from a conventional anthropological monograph. It is not arranged chronologically; indeed it has hardly any structure. Jean-Marc Pottiez's questions and van der Post's answers run on for more than 300 pages, without chapter headings and with only the occasional gap on the page to demarcate topics. Nevertheless, Pottiez (a French journalist) does his job well - directing van der Post to particular topics and then letting him reminisce. He tells of his close association with Jung, his relationship with Klara (his Bushman nanny), his experiences in the Second World War, his feelings for the Japanese, for Mountbatten, for Java, Switzerland, England and Africa, and much more. His writings are always conversational in style, so it is fitting that here his conversation should be captured in print. Those who dislike his cavalier methods, and his mixing of description and fact with tangential anecdotes, will not enjoy it; but those who relish his style and outlook will no doubt find it a pleasure to read or, better, to dip into.

# TLS

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J. H. C. Leach TLS 8th August 1986

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by Pierre Grimal. Translated by A. R. Maxwell-Hyslop

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## Forging the written word

Vivien Law

R. E. LATHAM and D. R. HOWLETT  
Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British  
Sources: Fascicule III D-E  
882pp. Oxford University Press for the British  
Academy, £50.  
0 19 736023 3

Languages like pidgin English, or medieval Latin, or the old lingua franca of trading days, have a special fascination. Nobody's mother tongue, everyone's birthright, they are subject to the whim of individual speakers to an extent unknown in languages which are the preserve of a small group of native speakers. The Latin used in medieval Britain, far from being static and inflexible, was as receptive to the needs of everyday life as English was. Its development, charted in the *Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources*, parallels the more familiar story told in the *Oxford English Dictionary*.

During the Anglo-Saxon period, when Latin was accessible only to a few highly trained people (but in compensation much official business was transacted in the vernacular), its vocabulary grew through the resources of the language itself. The suffix *-men*, for example,

could be used to form nouns with a grandiose air: a *donamen* is a much more ceremonious sort of gift than a plain *donum*. In the same high style you could avoid the simple *est*, "it is", in favour of the pompous *esse dinoscitur*, "it is known to be"; and if you wanted an exotic flavour to your writing, you would seek out Greek loan-words. *Ecclesia* and *dogma* were long since naturalized, but *epistasis*, "attention", would be bound to impress baffled readers.

After the Conquest, Latin took on a wider role in local administration. Its often barely literate users – no Greek trimmings for them – had nothing to fall back on but their own language. When Scottish clerks had to record grants of land in the native unit, the *dabhach*, they puzzled over its Latin form: *davacha* or *divachus* or *davachata*? By and large, English speakers were agreed that the Latin version of *dai werk*, the amount of land that could be tilled in a day, was *dauvercata* – except for the men of Kent, who preferred *dauverca*, and a solitary clerk in Essex, who coined *dauvercelanda*. Vernacular and Latin fertilized one another: Latin *dealbare* became Old French *dauber*, English *daub*, and was borrowed back into Latin as *daubare*. Writers like Wyclif, known for their role in forging the vocabulary of English, were no less inventive

in Latin.

Fascicule Three, D-E, prepared by R. E. Latham and D. R. Howlett, with the assistance of A. H. Powell and R. Sharpe, is a considerable advance over Fascicule One, both in layout and in its extensive use of manuscript as well as printed sources, to the great benefit of local historians. It is a major step forward in an important project. Linguists might wish that the editors would devise some way of indicating which of the many variant spellings listed for a particular word are common and which are one-off or restricted to a single locality. The bibliography (also available separately, price £10) is a useful research tool, apart from the non-committal use of "[attrib.]", The grammar attributed to Duns Scotus, to take one case, has been known for the past half-century to be the work of Thomas of Erfurt, hardly an Englishman. It has no business here. Otherwise, to confirmed dictionary-browsers, even those with rusty Latin, this volume offers many delights. Try, for example, *duplicarius*. In Classical Latin a "recipient of double rations", it is used by the same English source to mean both "lame in two legs" and "double dealer". As Humpty Dumpty said to Alice, "When I use a word, it means just what I choose it to mean." Many a medieval scribe would have agreed.

## Verbal relations

John A. C. Greppin

ANDRÉ MARTINET  
Des Steppes aux océans: L'indo-européen et les  
"Indo-Européens"  
274pp. Paris: Payot, 150 fr.  
2 228 14080 5

Books entitled "The Indo-Europeans" are of a genre, and they are many. Few are actually poor, but most are not distinguished. A recent example by Philip Baldi (1983) and, a little earlier, that by W. B. Lockwood (1969), were workmanlike, but are not destined to a long life or frequent reprinting. But the present publication by André Martinet is something different, a remarkable book by a distinguished linguist who in his later years has brought us a work which, like Meillet's *Introduction* (1937), will remain for a long time as one of substance and of reference. It will be praised for its subtle insight into a field that is, to say the least, well turned, and will be praised also for the way the intellectual maturity of the author radiates from every chapter.

No one will agree with it wholly, for Indo-European studies are currently in a state of ferment. Martinet's support of the archaeological theories of Marija Gimbutas will place him in front of the cannon-muzzles of a hundred rampaging archaeologists; his quiet endorsement of the late Georges Dumézil's theory of cultural tripitavition will bother to distraction a multitude of specialists in comparative mythology; and, finally, his innovative Indo-European phonological system, paralleling in part the glottalic ideas proposed by the Georgian scholar Thomas Gamkrelidze, will produce first stunned amazement, and then scholarly violence. This is the book of an independent and brave mind.

In addition to its author's strong views, the book has other unusual features, in particular the detailed chapters on Indo-European archaeology and mythology. In many other respects Martinet adopts the formula followed since the days of Bopp, whose theories (1816) placed the Indo-European homeland in India. Martinet gives the traditional and, as usual, all too short descriptions of the principal Indo-European dialect groups, from Celtic in the West to Tocharian in the East, and allows readers to study their vocabularies to see what the early Indo-European peoples had in common. One notes the related words for "ruler": Latin *rex*, the ancient Gauls *rix*, the Cloths *reiks* and the Indians *rajah*. Yet the Greeks, who came to govern themselves with greater skill than other Indo-Europeans, had the word *basileus*, "king" – not an Indo-European word, and perhaps the Greeks got it from an Old European people who knew something about politics that the Indo-Europeans didn't.



Children returning from the baker's in Eridir: reproduced from Turkey, a book of 83 colour photographs by Roland and Sabrina Michaud with an introduction by Daniel Farson (83pp. £20. 0500 24126 0), which will be published by Thames and Hudson next week.

The Indo-Europeans, according to the *Kurgan* theories of Marija Gimbutas, which Martinet seconds, are first noted in 5000 ac in the black-soil region of the Ukraine, and radiated westwards from there; by 3000 ac we can clearly follow their path as they penetrated Europe. These people, as Trubetzkoy pointed out long ago, merged with the Old European population, and our European races of today began to be moulded, each with its own physical features, dialects, laws and literatures. But things did not become genetically firm at that early date.

If we consider the people inhabiting what is now France, for example, we would note a continual admixing of racial types, and Martinet takes a special interest in this. He states that after the arrival of the Gauls, a Celtic people, in the fourth and third centuries ac, there was penetration from the south by the vigorous Romans, an Italic people. The Romans' confrontation with the Gauls is well known, their triumph was complete, and the races merged. But Greek culture penetrated too, for the Hellenes had also been adventurous. Early in the first millennium bc they sent off colonists in all directions: east along the Black Sea as far as the western edge of the Caucasian mountains, where they merged with the Circassian people whom Jason of the Golden Pleece had confronted; and west to many places, including southern France, establishing by 600 ac colonies in various coastal areas, of which Marseille – the Greeks called it Massilia

– was to become the most renowned.

Though we can describe the westward movement of the Indo-Europeans, it is difficult to account for their eastward movement. The paths taken by the Indic and Iranian people are obscure, as are those of the Hittites and Armenians, for archaeology has given us no clues. It is supposed that the Indic and Iranian peoples stayed together until they reached the area near the Punjab, south of the Hindu Kush, probably by 2000 ac. It is also supposed (and this is guess-work) that those who would become the Indians moved south and east into land held by the darker-skinned Dravidian people; those who were to become the Iranians moved slightly westward, into the area of modern Iran and Afghanistan.

This book comes, frankly, as a great surprise, for there had been little intimation that Martinet had conceived such a project. Though his scholarly production has always been great – and is now, for a man in his late seventies, prodigious – in his articles there has been, since the earliest 1960s, no Indo-European work save for a stray short piece. And even his earlier work in Indo-European studies had always concentrated on comparative phonology, a field, especially in the realm of irregularities, in which he made many powerful statements. But he had never expressed an interest in *Kulturgeschichte* until a short piece on Indo-European homelands, which forms part of this book, appeared in 1983. André Martinet has again astonished us.

## Looking to the mother tongue

Ralph Grillo

MICHAEL STUBBS (Editor)  
The Other Languages of England: Linguistic minorities project  
429pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul, £25 (paperback), £11.95.  
0 7100 9290 0

One of the most significant changes in Western Europe since the Second World War has been the growth of an "immigrant" family population with origins outside Europe, especially in Asia, Africa or the Middle East, and cultural traditions very different from, or at least a variance with, those of the receiving societies. This study by the Linguistic Minorities Project (LMP) documents one small but important aspect of this situation by showing in great detail its implications for linguistic diversity in English cities.

The gist of the evidence has been known for some time, partly from the Inner London Education Authority's pioneering work, partly from the LMP's previous publications. So it comes as no surprise to learn that in Bradford, for example, in 1981, some 18 per cent of schoolchildren were bilingual, half of them speakers of Punjabi, and that in Harrogate bilinguals made up 31 per cent of school rolls, although there it was Greek-speakers who formed the largest group. The figures may be simply stated, but the policy implications, which the LMP considers with special reference to bilingual education, are complex.

In fact, the figures are by no means simple. The study posed serious methodological problems, and a large part of *The Other Languages of England* – too much, probably, for the general reader – explains what these were. Yet they are not merely of technical interest, for the difficulties presented by the different labels which parents, children, teachers, administrators and linguists attach to a simple South Asian language, for example, are integral to any inquiry into the experience of those speaking "other" languages in predominantly monolingual England. The LMP's solution was to conduct a range of surveys which approached the data from different angles through different, though overlapping, sets of informants. And these surveys were not simply fact-finding devices, for they could, and did, change or create linguistic consciousness – as when pupils were asked to provide details on their own language practices.

In the LMP view, Britain is now inescapably a multilingual society. In much of Europe in the 1960s, a major issue for policy-makers concerned immigrants' poor command of the dominant languages. In the 1970s, however, concern switched to the so-called "mother tongue", and the LMP began to document the "community school" sector in England: the thousands of classes seeking to support the languages and cultures of "immigrants" which exist largely on the margins of the official education system. On the basis of this research, the LMP urges that bilingualism be accepted as a valuable resource, and promoted within mainstream education.

Unfortunately, this book was completed in 1983, and does not comment on two important recent developments in this field: the "Honeyford affair" in Bradford, which encapsulated so many of the issues when a headmaster published his controversial views on multi-cultural education in the *Salisbury Review* in 1984; and the Swann Report of 1985, *Education for All*, which summarized the evidence (including that of the LMP) on the educational experience of minority children and set out a framework for policy. The Swann Report is a weighty document containing many valuable proposals, but it balked at the question which concerns the LMP most. Swann was "for" mother tongues, but argued that they are best served by the unofficial sector. So the matter of bilingual education remains unresolved, but given the difficulties facing education at large, it is likely that the situation of minority groups will, for some time, be given low priority. Lord Swann's report will follow Lord Bullock's *Language for Life* (1975): admired, but left on the shelf.

## TLS Listings

The TLS Listings provides full publication details of those books received each week by the TLS which seem to fall within the main interests of our readers. Children's books, foreign-language books and paperback reprints of recent works are not, however, included. We regret that we cannot answer telephone enquiries or enter into correspondence about inclusions and exclusions.

### Anthropology

Brettell, Caroline B. Men Who Migrate, Women Who Wait: Population and history in a Portuguese parish  
Guildford: Princeton UP, 32pp. £26.70. 0 691 09424 1.  
Lodge, Tom, editor Resistance and Ideology in Settler Societies (Southern African Studies, 4)  
Johannesburg: Raven, UK distr. Birmingham: Third World Publications, 27pp. £7.95 (paperback).  
0 8695 304 5.  
McDonagh, Gary Wray Good Families of Barcelona: A social history of power in the industrial era  
Guildford: Princeton UP, 262pp. £15.10. 0 691 09426 8.  
Slegel, James T. Solo in the New Order: Language and hierarchy in an Indonesian city  
Guildford: Princeton UP, 338pp. £20.10. 0 691 09427 6.

### Archaeology

Harrison, R. M. Excavations at Saracaphane in Istanbul, vol. 1: Structures, Architectural Decoration, Small Finds, Coins, Bones, Molluscs  
Guildford: Princeton UP/Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 432pp., plates. £83.00. 0 691 03582 2.

### Architecture

Bruskhill, R. W. Illustrated Handbook of Vernacular Architecture, 3rd edition  
Faber, 256pp., illus. £7.50 (paperback). 0 571 13916 7.  
24/87.  
McClendon, Charles B. The Imperial Abbey of Farfa: Architectural currents of the early Middle Ages (Publications in the History of Art, 36)  
Yale UP, 197pp., plates. £30. 0 300 03333 8. 22/1/87.

### Art, including photography

Erikson, Svend, and Geoffrey de Bellagune, Danish text translated by R. J. Charleston Séveres Porcelains: Vincennes and Séveres 1740-1800 (Faber Monographs on Pottery and Porcelain)  
Faber, 379pp., illus. £51. 0 71 08354 X. 24/1/87.  
Kartsonas, Anna D. Anastasis: The making of an image  
Guildford: Princeton UP, 263pp., plates. £38.40. 0 691 04039 7.  
Schäfer, Helmut, edited by Emma Brunner-Traut, translated by John Baker, foreword by E. H. Gombrich Principles of Egyptian Art (1st pub. 1919)  
Oxford: Griffith Institute, 470pp., illus. 0 900416 52 1 (hc). 0 900416 51 3 (pb).

Sears, Elizabeth The Ages of Man: Medieval interpretations of the life cycle  
Guildford: Princeton UP, 235pp., plates. £36.70. 0 691 04037 0.  
Szarkowski, John Irving Penn  
New York: Museum of Modern Art, distr. by Thames and Hudson, 216pp., illus. £16.95/\$29.95 (paperback). 0 87070 563 6. 12/1/87.

### Bibliography

The First Printed Catalogue of the Bodleian Library, 1605: A facsimile  
Oxford: Clarendon, 655pp., index. £40. 0 19 87388 1. 8/1/87.  
Olin, Alan Bibliography of Nautical Books 1987: Books in print, forthcoming and recently out of print  
Warash Nautical Bookshop, 278pp. £29.95 (paperback). 0 946646 01 2. 12/1/86.  
Weitzmann, Kurt, and Herbert L. Kessler The Cotton Genesis: British Library Codex Cotton Otho B.V. (Illustrations in the Manuscripts of the Septuagint, vol. 1)  
Guildford: Princeton UP, 250pp., plates. £100.10. 0 691 04031 1.

### Biography, including letters and diaries

Blackmore, Susan The Adventures of a Parapsychologist  
Buffalo, NY: Prometheus, 249pp. \$19.95. 0 87975 360 9. 24/1/87.  
Brinkman, John Malcolm Truman Capote: A memoir  
Sidgwick and Jackson, 182pp. £9.95. 0 283 99423 1. 24/1/87.  
Dreiser, Theodore, and H. L. Mencken, edited by Thomas P. Riggold Dreiser-Mencken Letters: The correspondence of Theodore Dreiser and H. L. Mencken, 1907-1945, 2 vols.  
Philadelphia: Pennsylvania UP, UK distr. AUPG, 843pp. vol. 1 £25.70/\$34.95, vol. 2 £35.95/\$39.95, set £59.65/\$64.90. 0 8122 8008 3 (vol. 1), 0 8122 8043 1 (vol. 2), 0 8122 8044 X (set). 1/87.  
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Oxford: Clarendon, 266pp. £30. 0 19 821909 5. 8/1/87.  
Moriarty, Berthe, edited by Kathleen Adler and Tamar Gari The Correspondence of Berthe Moriarty  
Camden Press, 246pp. £5.95 (paperback). 0 948491 03 6. 24/1/87.

Ward, John The Wrong Side of Glory: Autobiographical short stories  
Hebden Bridge: Littlewood, 80pp. £4.95 (paperback). 0 940407 24 X. 18/1/86.

### Economics

Winham, Gilbert R. International Trade and the Tokyo Round Negotiation  
Guildford: Princeton UP, 449pp. £30.10 (hardcover), £9.10 (paperback). 0 691 02275 8 (hc), 0 691 02243 7 (pb).

### Fiction

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Chasterton, G. K., edited by Martin Gardner The Annotated Innocence of Father Brown  
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Black Swan, 332pp. £3.95 (paperback). 0 552 99211 9. 16/1/87.

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### Fiction in English translation

Landolfi, Tommaso, translated and edited by Katherine Jaxon, Introduction by Italo Calvino Words in Commotion and Other Stories  
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Fleischer, Cornell H. Bureaucrat and Intellectual in the Ottoman Empire: The historian Mustafa Ali (1541-1600) (Studies on the Near East series)  
Guildford: Princeton UP, 363pp. £30.10. 0 691 05464 9.

Hallezer, Stephen, editor and translator Inquisition and Society in Early Modern Europe  
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Harris, Robert D. Nocker and the Revolution of 1789  
Lanham, MD: University Press of America, UK distr. Eurospan, 803pp. \$38.75. 0 8191 5002 7. 12/86.

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